

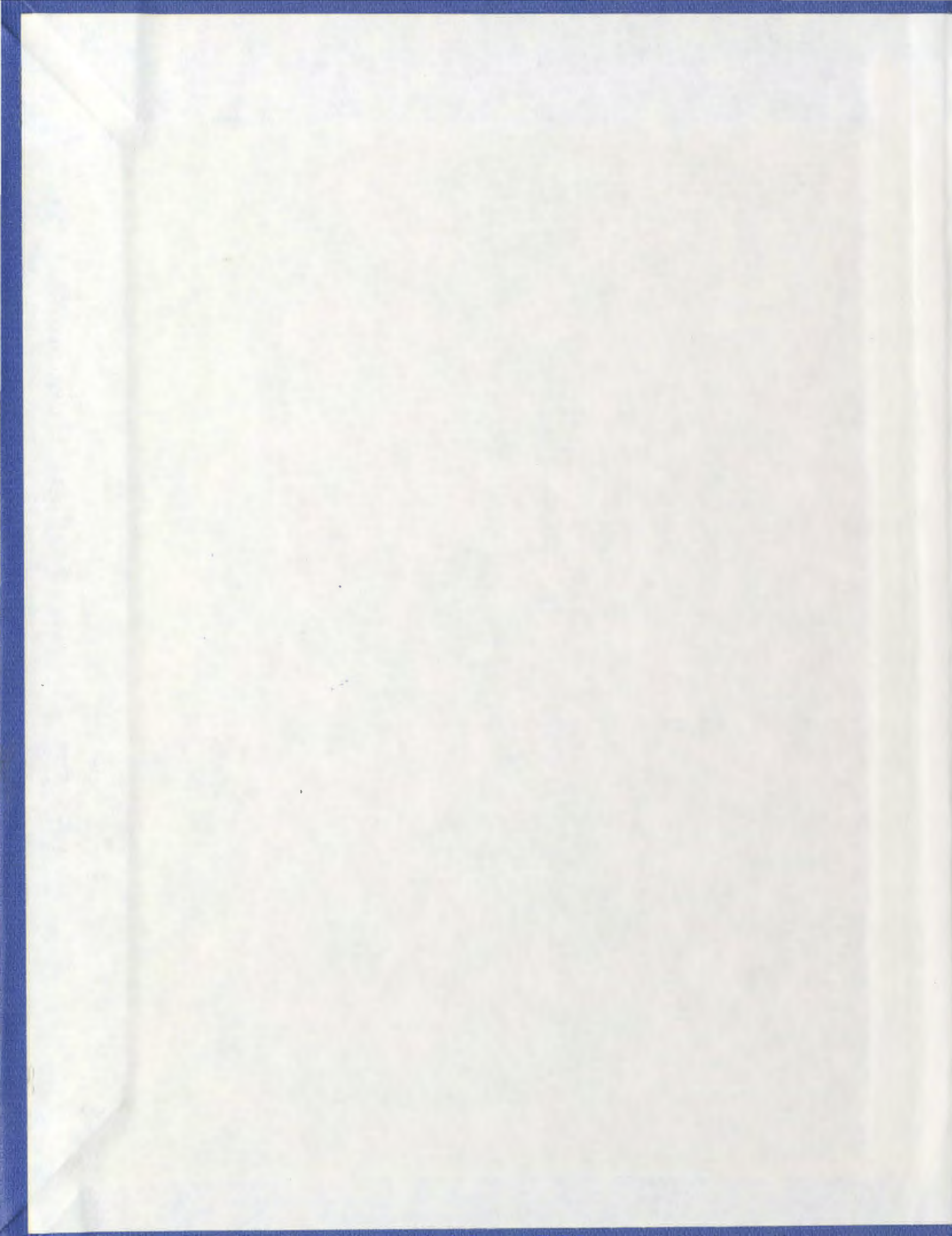
GIDE'S ATTITUDE TO REALITY:  
ITS ROLE IN HIS APPROACH  
TO THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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GIDE'S ATTITUDE TO REALITY: ITS ROLE IN HIS  
APPROACH TO THE SYMBOLIST MOVEMENT

Ian Matthew Hesson, M.A. (Glas.)



Submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
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Department of French and Spanish  
Memorial University of Newfoundland  
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Newfoundland

## ABSTRACT

In this thesis it is proposed to consider the role of Gide's attitude to reality in his development of a view of art which persuaded him to ally himself temporarily with the Symbolist school. In a short introduction the point will be made that Gide's first accurate knowledge of Symbolist theory came in an article which he read in January, 1891, two months after the completion of the Cahiers d'André Walter, and that he immediately declared himself to be a Symbolist.

In the first chapter the article in La Plume will be analysed in order to discover the definition of Symbolism with which Gide identified. Further study will be undertaken to isolate the views on art which Gide and the Symbolists held in common.

The development of Gide's attitude to reality will then be examined in the light of basic Freudian psychology. The influence of his upbringing on his relationship to the world around him will be discussed. In particular an attempt will be made to evaluate the relationship between his neurotic anxiety, the dichotomy in his personality and the weakness of his hold on reality. These aspects of Gide's personality will then be considered as they are reflected and projected in the Cahiers d'André Walter.

On the basis of the findings made above, the Cahiers d'André Walter will be studied from the point of view of the function which it fulfils in Gide's life. An attempt will be made to explain why the writing of his first work lifted Gide from despair and opened up new vistas for him. The absolute state in which the work of art is created will be examined, and its unique value of allowing both parts of Gide's personality to find expression will be indicated.

In the conclusion it is proposed to show that the attraction of Symbolism for Gide lay in the fact that Symbolist theory confirmed what he had found in writing the Cahiers d'André Walter: that art was a means of attaining a superior form of reality, which in Gide's case was the integration of his personality.



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The following is a list of the abbreviations used in footnote references to Gide's work:

O.C. I-XV

Oeuvres complètes, 15 vols., Paris, Gallimard, 1932-1939.

Journal I

Journal 1889-1939, Paris, Gallimard, 1948.

Journal II

Journal 1939-1949, Souvenirs, Paris, Gallimard, 1954.

Romans

Romans, récits et soties, œuvres lyriques, Paris, Gallimard, 1958.

Si le grain ne meurt

Si le grain ne meurt, 31st edition, Paris, Gallimard, 1928.

Incidences

Incidences, Paris, Gallimard, 1924.

Correspondance

Gide-Valéry, Correspondance 1890-1942, Paris, Gallimard, 1955.

## INTRODUCTION

Although it has been suggested that Gide began his literary career under the influence of Mallarmé and the Symbolists,<sup>1</sup> there seems little justification for this view. Martin-Chauffier, editor of the Oeuvres Complètes, states categorically that Gide's only literary contact at the time of the Cahiers was Pierre Louÿs,<sup>2</sup> and Gide confirms this. In a letter to Paul Valéry dated January 26, 1891, he places the beginning of his direct association with the Symbolist school in the early part of that month when he read an article on Jean Moréas in the issue of La Plume of January 1, 1891:

Puis un article assez vulgaire, de La Plume consacré à Jean Moréas, mais pour moi capital car il enferme l'histoire de l'école nouvelle et l'exposé de ses rêves . . . . [E]t toutes leurs théories, toutes leurs professions de foi me semblent une apologie directe de mon livre quand ce ne sont pas ses phrases propres décalquées. Donc, je suis symboliste et sachez-le.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the article lies in its exposition of the Symbolists' theories, and Gide suggests here that, far from having been influenced by Symbolism, he will associate with

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. C. Savage, "Gide's Criticism of Symbolism," Modern Language Review, LXI, No. 4, October, 1966, p. 601.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. O.C. I, p. xvii.

<sup>3</sup>Correspondance, p. 46.



it because its ideas correspond to those embodied in the Cahiers d'André Walter. He is thus making the point quite clearly that the Cahiers antedates his introduction to Symbolist theory.

The question which immediately springs to mind is obvious. If Gide was not influenced by the Symbolists, why should the Cahiers d'André Walter exemplify Symbolist theory even down to the point of using the same vocabulary? There can be little doubt that Gide, passionately interested in literature as he was, knew in general terms what was happening in the field of letters in Paris. He was a regular reader of journals such as the Revue des Deux Mondes, and his friend Pierre Louÿs was already actively engaged in the artistic world. One would therefore expect Gide to have some information regarding the current of Symbolism in the literary circles of the time. Nevertheless, his knowledge of the Symbolists was obviously very vague, if not actually imperfect. In the same letter to Valéry, for example, he claims that he was a Symbolist even before reading the article in La Plume: "Je me savais symboliste infiniment . . . ."<sup>4</sup> However, at the same time his letter shows that his conception of Symbolism bore so little resemblance to the views which he had ascribed to the Symbolist movement in 1890 that he had nothing but scorn and hostility for "Valéry's school":

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Voyez: j'étais, alors encore que je vous avais vu,  
alors encore depuis que j'étais rentré en la ville,  
frondeur acharné de ce que je puis dire "votre école"  
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It was only when the article in La Plume presented him with a true account of the Symbolists' theory that Gide's attitude towards them changed from criticism to acceptance. It would seem therefore that before January, 1891, the Symbolists could have influenced him only in a negative manner.

Obviously common literary and philosophical influences shared by Gide and the Symbolists can help to explain the similarity of views which the article in La Plume revealed to Gide, but it is our intention rather to concentrate on those factors in his life and character which contribute to his view of art. Our interest thus lies in Gide's attitude to reality and the part it played in his evolving an artistic outlook similar to that of the Symbolists. In order to evaluate this we will first analyse the article in La Plume in order to discover which aspects of Symbolist theory were most likely to have attracted Gide. We will then attempt to investigate Gide's attitude to reality in terms of basic Freudian psychology, using the Cahiers d'André Walter, the Journal and Si le grain ne meurt as our main sources of information on Gide's life. The tentative nature of such a study becomes apparent when one considers that much

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

important material regarding the early part of Gide's life is still unpublished and that it is therefore necessary to depend more than one would like on the retrospective view of Si le grain ne meurt. We do, however, take some comfort from this statement by Ireland who has had access to much of the unpublished material:

Gide's own account of his childhood, in Si le grain ne meurt, is neither impeccably accurate nor wholly free from bias; but as a memorial of his impressions and recollections it is so uncannily vivid that it cannot fail to carry a very large measure of conviction, and even as an objective record, though it is necessarily very incomplete, it is, on the whole, remarkably trustworthy.<sup>6</sup>

Having considered Gide's relationship with the world around him and described his state of mind in 1890, we will then study the effect which the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter had on him and suggest reasons for this being so. Finally, we will attempt to show that it was the experience of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter, with its beneficial effect on his attitude to reality, which led him to adopt a conception of art closely resembling the one which was revealed in the article in La Plume.

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<sup>6</sup> G.W. Ireland, André Gide: a Study of his Creative Writings, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 5.



## CHAPTER I

### GIDE'S INTRODUCTION TO SYMBOLIST THEORY

The article in La Plume which was of such capital importance in changing Gide's attitude to the Symbolist school is entitled "Les Annales du Symbolisme," signed by Achille Delaroche, and occupies seven pages in the appendix to the issue of January 1, 1891.<sup>1</sup> One finds in it, in addition to an account of the main criticisms of Symbolism and an attempt to counter them, the history of the school, a list of the main figures connected with it, including Mallarmé and Maeterlinck, and an exposé of the theories and aims of the Symbolists which contains much of obvious interest and attraction to the author of the Cahiers d'André Walter. It is intended, in this chapter, to analyse Delaroche's article with a view to isolating those factors which were likely to have been of greatest importance in inducing Gide to modify his attitude towards the Symbolist school. The criticisms of the Symbolists which are cited in the article will be discussed in the light of those made by Gide before 1891, and the positive points which Delaroche makes in defence of the

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<sup>1</sup> A. Delaroche, "Les Annales du Symbolisme," La Plume, No. 41, January 1, 1891, pp. 14-20. Mallet, in the Gide-Waléry Correspondance, p. 46, note 3, unaccountably states that the article is unsigned.

Symbolists will be studied in order to identify the views which they held in common with Gide.

Gide defines his attitude to the Symbolists before his reading of Delaroche's article in a statement in his letter to Valéry of January 26, 1891, which leaves little doubt as to his antagonism towards what he calls "Valéry's school":

Voyez: j'étais, alors encore que je vous avais vu, alors encore depuis que j'étais rentré en la ville, frondeur acharné de ce que je puis dire "votre école" et me postais moi-même comme apôtre de vérités neuves (vérités d'art s'entend), de vérités antagonistes des vôtres. . . . je croyais ces esthéticiens d'aujourd'hui plongés dans des nimbes vagues, inconscients presque, obscurs par joie de mots aimés pour les mots mêmes, etc.<sup>2</sup>

He gives here four separate but interrelated reasons for his hostility towards the Symbolists. Firstly, he makes the general point that the Symbolist aesthetic offers nothing new, and does not represent artistic progress. In the second place, the Symbolist "esthéticiens," barely conscious of their own existence or of that of the world around them, have turned away from the realities of life in favour of more ethereal realms.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, the Symbolists are more concerned

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<sup>2</sup>Correspondance, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>It is worth noting, in passing, that this is precisely the reason which Gide later gave for having ended his association with the Symbolists. Cf. Les Faux-Monnayeurs, O.C. XII, p. 206: ". . . la grande faiblesse de l'école symboliste, c'est de n'avoir apporté qu'une esthétique; . . . [Le symboliste] ne se comportait pas du tout dans la vie, il ne cherchait pas à la comprendre; il la niait; il lui tournait le dos."

with formal considerations, with playing with words for their own sake, than with giving expression to ideas or emotions. Finally, Symbolist poetry, as a result of this formalism, is marred by obscurity.

These four criticisms of the Symbolists would seem to have been widely held among the critics of the period preceding 1890, for when Delaroche seeks representatives of contemporary criticism he chooses two critics who between them attack the Symbolists on precisely these four points.<sup>4</sup> The critics selected by Delaroche are Paul Bourde, whose article appeared in Le Temps of August 6, 1885, and Brunetière, whose comprehensive judgement of the Symbolist school was featured in the Revue des Deux Mondes of November 1, 1888. Their

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<sup>4</sup>It might be objected that the similarity in views between Gide and the two critics could have resulted simply from Gide's having read and adopted their criticisms in Delaroche's article before writing to Valéry. We would suggest, however, that it is more likely that Bourde's and Brunetière's views confirmed and clarified those which Gide already held. This was a relationship to influence which Gide claimed to be characteristic of him, and there is evidence that at least one of his views predated his reading of Delaroche's article. In a letter to Marcel Drouin, written in 1889 or early 1890, he tells the latter of the review which he and Pierre Louÿs intend to found: "Le plan de la revue est très simple: elle doit sans cesse indiquer les idées futures . . . un grand éclectisme - simplement le refus des idées rétrogrades ou décadentes." (Quoted in G.W. Ireland, André Gide: A Study of his Creative Writings, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 20-21). Here, as in his letter to Valéry, Gide sees himself as the apostle of progress and in opposition to all ideas which do not look to the future. In addition, it is difficult to imagine that Gide, in the latter part of the 1880's and with his knowledge of the Parisian literary scene, would use "décadentes" without some reference to the literary movement.



criticisms of Symbolism correspond to Gide's, and thus, when Delaroche defends the Symbolists against Bourde and Brunetière he is at the same time destroying the foundation on which Gide's previously hostile attitude to the school had been based, and is preparing the way for a more positive approach.

Bourde's article, according to Delaroche, is ". . . un long article qui vaut d'être rappelé, car il marque une date."<sup>5</sup> It is therefore surprising to find that Delaroche devotes very little space to its contents, quoting only twice from it and referring to no more than three points which Bourde made regarding the new movement. Bourde praises the young poets for having introduced into poetic form a much-needed freedom from "le joug des anciennes règles,"<sup>6</sup> which allowed a wider range of expression than was hitherto possible. At the same time, however, he does touch on one of Gide's four points of criticism by accusing them of obscurity. Bourde's third observation is the criticism to which Delaroche obviously attaches most importance. It is a condemnation of the attitude to life of the young Decadent poets, and again foreshadows one of Gide's criticisms. Bourde says:

La santé étant essentiellement vulgaire et bonne pour les rustres, le décadent doit être au moins névropathe, et recourir à la seringue de Pravaz, pour obtenir l'état morbide qui lui convient . . . . Au moral, il est

<sup>5</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Delaroche, art. cit., p. 16.

catholique pour pouvoir blasphémer Dieu et pimenter ses plaisirs par l'idée du péché . . . .<sup>7</sup>

The Decadents, in this view, have a completely negative attitude to life. Their approach to religion reflects a fundamental rejection of moral values, and they use the syringe in order to escape from the realities of life.<sup>8</sup>

All three of the observations which Bourde made regarding the new school had been made before by other critics,<sup>9</sup> and therefore could not themselves justify the importance which Delaroche accords them, and in particular the attack on Decadence, as having marked a turning-point. Their true value, it would appear, lay less in what they said than in the article which Jean Moréas wrote in response to them in Le XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle of August 11, 1885. Moréas's article justified the description of a turning-point, for, in replying to Bourde, it formulated for the first time the principles of the new aesthetic. At the same time Moréas rejected the term "Décadent," with all its connotations of negation, in

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that the Decadents sought through artificial means to attain to a state which was Gide's by nature, and that literature, by re-establishing psychological balance, fulfilled a role for him diametrically opposed to that of the syringe. At the same time, it is difficult, on seeing Bourde's description of the Decadents' attitude to reality, not to think of Gide's own "Immoralist," Michel.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Delaroche, art. cit., p. 15: "Mystificateurs, fous et décadents furent les moindres épithètes dont on gratifia les nouveaux venus."

favour of "Symboliste," which suggests much more positive and creative aspirations: "Les prétendus décadents cherchent, avant tout, dans leur art le pur concept et l'éternel symbole."<sup>10</sup> This was much more than a change in name, for it announced a reversal of the fundamental philosophical standpoint of the movement, but nevertheless it seems to have been ignored by the majority of contemporary critics.<sup>11</sup>

In view of the fact that Gide, in his letters to Marcel Drouin and Valéry, showed himself to be totally committed to the cause of progress in art and yet still criticised the Symbolists, it appears that he, too, was unaware of the development from Decadence to Symbolism of which Moréas's article was one expression.<sup>12</sup> Gide's ignorance of the fact that a new, forward-looking attitude had grown out of decadent pessimism lay at the heart of his misunderstanding of Symbolism, for his negative opinion of the Decadents would seem to have led him to dismiss the Symbolists as equally unworthy of his attention. Hence the impression which his writings give of scanty, superficial and perhaps

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Delaroche, art. cit., p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Delaroche, art. cit., p. 16: "Malgré ces déclarations nettes et catégoriques . . . l'équivoque n'en continua pas moins . . ."

<sup>12</sup> Gide's ignorance is less surprising when it is considered that a critic of the stature of Brunetière could write an article on the development of Symbolism without once making a clear distinction between Symbolists and Decadents. Cf. F. Brunetière: "Symbolistes et Décadents [*sic*]," Revue des Deux Mondes, November 1, 1888, pp. 213-226.

second-hand knowledge,<sup>13</sup> rather than of serious attempts at critical judgement of the school. It was only when Delaroche's article opened his eyes to the fact that the Symbolists' views were not the same as those of the Decadents that Gide was prepared to study more closely the details of the new aesthetic and to form an independent opinion.

If Bourde's attack and Moréas's response brought the distinction between Decadence and Symbolism to Gide's attention, then it was Brunetière's criticisms and Delaroche's replies which gave Gide an insight into the aims and aspirations of the Symbolists. Delaroche enumerates three points on which Brunetière criticises the Symbolists, and all three correspond to the criticisms expressed by Gide in his letter to Valéry. The first is the obscurity of their poetry<sup>14</sup> which had already been attacked by Bourde in 1885, an attack

<sup>13</sup> In particular there would seem to be a strong possibility of Gide's having read Brunetière's somewhat ironic article on the Symbolists in the Revue des Deux Mondes of November 1, 1888. Gide's "Subjectif" shows that he was a regular reader of Brunetière's contributions to the Revue des Deux Mondes between 1889 and 1893, the whole of the period covered by the "Subjectif," and it thus seems more than likely that he had read the article of November 1, 1888. Cf. J. Cotnam, "Le 'Subjectif', ou les lectures d'André Walter (1889-1893)", Cahiers André Gide I, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, pp. 15-113.

<sup>14</sup> Delaroche does not quote Brunetière on the question of obscurity. Had he done so, he might have offered us the following commentary by Brunetière on Gustav Kahn and René Ghil: "S'ils ont quelque autre mérite, avec celui d'être en général inintelligible, c'est de trahir, dans les rares endroits que l'on en croit comprendre, une ineffable ignorance de toutes choses et une inexpérience touchante de la vie." Brunetière, art. cit., p. 216.

continued by Maurice Peyrot in 1887:

Le romancier et le poète doivent écrire pour tout le monde, et non pour une catégorie restreinte d'adeptes.<sup>15</sup>

The remaining two points of Brunetière's criticism refer to the question of the relative importance of form and content for the Symbolists, and he brings out both the positive and negative aspects of their innovations by placing them in relation to the Parnassiens on the one hand and to the Naturalists on the other:

Réagissant contre le préjugé de la forme, outrée chez les Parnassiens, qui faisaient de la poésie "un pur badinage et de l'or même de la rime un clinquant, les Symbolistes ont groupé autour d'eux tous ceux qui croient qu'on peut faire entrer dans un vers des idées ou des sentiments. Et, dans un temps où, sous prétexte de Naturalisme, on avait réduit l'art à n'être plus qu'une imitation du contour extérieur des choses, ils ont paru rapprendre aux jeunes gens que les choses ont aussi une âme.<sup>16</sup>

Such an aesthetic position, avoiding extreme devotion either to form or to content, to idealism or to materialism, would seem to invalidate in advance Gide's criticism of January, 1891. However, this was no more than a statement of the Symbolists' intentions, based on a negative reaction to the other two schools, and Brunetière goes on to point out that, when it came to the question of producing a positive aesthetic

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<sup>15</sup> M. Peyrot, "Symbolistes et Décadents," Nouvelle Revue, November 1, 1887. Quoted by Delaroche, art. cit., p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 18.



as a practical alternative, the Symbolists failed through overreaction:

Mais, à leur tour, ils semblent oublier un peu que l'imitation de la nature, sans être tout l'art, en est au moins la condition première.<sup>17</sup>

The Symbolists, he suggests, in reacting against the Naturalists, had turned their back completely on reality and were, as Gide was to say in 1891, "plongés dans des nimbcs vagues."<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, their reaction against the Parnassiens, in Brunetière's view, did them an equal disservice:

Et peut-être, aussi, se sont-ils trop séparés des Parnassiens. En rimant moins bien que ses prédécesseurs, on sera toujours suspect de pouvoir moins qu'eux dans leur art.<sup>19</sup>

Gide, indeed, by suggesting that the Symbolists were "obscurs par joie de mots aimés pour les mots mêmes"<sup>20</sup> would seem to be looking on them as Parnassiens of inferior quality whose concern for form led to a complete lack of communication.

Thus Gide's criticism of the Symbolists on the counts of obscurity, formalism and divorce from reality could have found confirmation, if not inspiration, in the views of Brunetière, views which seem to have been general at the time, as evidenced by the articles of Bourde and Peyrot. It

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Correspondance, p. 46.

<sup>19</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> Correspondance, p. 46.

remains to study the arguments which Delaroche marshals in his article in defence of the Symbolists' point of view and which seem to have changed Gide's opinions so radically.

Delaroche begins his defence of Symbolism by attempting to give it respectability through its literary forebears. Among the more modern of its precursors he cites Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert, who "furent, par leur côté supérieur, hautement idéalistes."<sup>21</sup> Baudelaire, too, is mentioned as a major influence, as is Verlaine who not only introduced the works of the "poètes maudits," Tristan Corbière, Rimbaud and Mallarmé to the young writers, but also in his own poetry "avait, le premier, trouvé la musicale expression de toute la mélancolie mystique et sensuelle de l'âme moderne . . . ."<sup>22</sup>

The suggestion that the Symbolists regarded these writers as kindred spirits might be expected to lead Gide to reconsider his previous harsh judgement of the school, for he, too, was an admirer of them. Throughout 1890 he had been a regular reader of both Balzac and Flaubert,<sup>23</sup> and had been particularly impressed by Flaubert who is mentioned in the Cahiers d'André Walter as "l'ami toujours souhaité."<sup>24</sup> The

<sup>21</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Cahiers André Gide I, pp. 54-55 and p. 71. Between November 1889 and November 1890 Gide read eight works by Balzac and five by Flaubert.

<sup>24</sup> O.C. I, p. 33.

impression made on Gide by Baudelaire may be judged from his comment of November 8, 1890, in the "Subjectif" on the latter's Mon coeur mis à nu:

Quand on lit entre les lignes, moi, ça me passionne. Les dernières pages - avec la rubrique Hygiène, Conduite, Morale - sont angoissantes. Il me semble que sur Baudelaire tout reste à dire.<sup>25</sup>

In the case of Verlaine, one can easily understand the attraction for Gide of his poetry, for "la mélancolie mystique et sensuelle de l'âme moderne" accurately defines the subject-matter of the Cahiers d'André Walter. More than one critic in 1891 noted that the major theme of Gide's first work was the tragic conflict between the spirit and the flesh.<sup>26</sup>

Having established that the Symbolists may lay claim to reputable ancestry, Delaroche then attempts to refute the charges of formalism and obscurity. In order to do this he quotes at considerable length from Moréas's "Un Manifeste littéraire" which appeared in the Figaro Littéraire of September 18, 1886. Among the excerpts quoted, the one in which Moréas defines the aims of Symbolism is of interest in that it offers several points of resemblance to ideas which Gide expressed in various writings in 1890:

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<sup>25</sup> Op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>26</sup> Typical was Georges Pelissier, who, in La Revue Encyclopédique of August 1, 1891, suggested that the epitaph for Allain could equally well apply to André Walter himself: "Ci-gît Allain qui devint fou / Parce qu'il crut avoir une âme," adding, however, "ou plutôt, mais la différence est capitale, parce qu'il voulut n'avoir pas de corps." (Quoted in Ireland, op. cit., p. 47).

Ennemie de l'enseignement, la déclamation, la fausse sensibilité, la description objective, la poésie symboliste cherche à vêtir l'Idée d'une forme sensible . . . . Quant aux phénomènes, ils ne sont que des apparences sensibles destinées à représenter leurs affinités ésotériques avec des Idées primordiales.<sup>27</sup>

The role ascribed by Moréas to the phenomena of the real world would seem to be the one which Gide proposed in a note to the Traité du Narcisse which is dated 1890:

Les Vérités demeurent derrière les Formes - Symboles. Tout phénomène est le Symbole d'une Vérité. Son seul devoir est qu'il la manifeste.<sup>28</sup>

In both passages the external world is seen as an intermediate state beyond which lies true reality. The value for the artist of the phenomena of the real world lies in their role as symbols representing aspects of the absolute truth, the essence of existence, which lies only in the realm of the ideal. Objects, therefore, do not appear in art for their own sake, as they do in the works of the Naturalists. Nor, in Moréas's view, should the artist detract from his view of the ideal by allowing rhetoric, false sensibility or didactic aims to dominate his work. By doing so the artist shows preference for himself, for his own intentions, over the Idea,

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<sup>27</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 17. The section which I have underlined would seem to be Delaroche's abridgement of the full version: "Ainsi, dans cet art, les tableaux de la nature, les actions des humains, tous les phénomènes concrets ne sauraient se manifester eux-mêmes; ce sont là des apparences . . . ." Cf. G. Michaud, Message poétique du Symbolisme, Paris, Nizet, 1947, p. 725.

<sup>28</sup> O.C. I, p. 215.

the Truth to be expressed. This view is echoed by Gide in his note to the Traité du Narcisse:

L'artiste, le savant, ne doit pas se préférer à la Vérité qu'il veut dire: voilà toute sa morale; ni le mot, ni la phrase, à l'idée qu'ils veulent montrer . . . .<sup>29</sup>

It should also be noted that when Gide's letter to Valéry criticises the Symbolists for playing with words for their own sake, it is subscribing to the same objection of formalism.

In enlarging upon his passing reference to declamation, Moréas seeks to achieve a balanced view of art in which neither form nor content would be totally dominant. The concrete form with which the Symbolist poet seeks to clothe the Idea to be expressed, should not, he says, be an end in itself:

[L]a poésie symboliste cherche à vêtir l'Idée d'une forme sensible qui, néanmoins, ne serait pas son but à elle-même, mais, tout en servant à exprimer l'Idée, demeurerait sujette. L'Idée à son tour ne doit point se laisser voir privée des somptueuses simarres des analogies extérieures; car le caractère essentiel de l'art symbolique consiste à ne jamais aller jusqu'à la concentration de l'Idée en soi.<sup>30</sup>

This would appear to be in complete agreement with Gide inasmuch as it subordinates form to content. In addition, Gide would find confirmation of his own views in Moréas's rejection of any attempt to present the Idea directly "en soi."

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Delaroché, art. cit., p. 17.



Moréas's contention is that Symbolist art should suggest rather than describe the Idea, and Gide, in a comment in his "Subjectif," dated August 17, 1890, puts forward the same view:

C'est évident qu'on ne peut jamais arriver à faire éprouver aux autres l'émotion sienne dans son intensité, qu'il vaut bien mieux en prendre son parti dès l'abord et, par le talent, insinuer l'émotion. La faire sentir symboliquement - suggestivement . . . .<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Gide appears to be in agreement with Moréas on the very matter which lay at the root of the charge of obscurity which he, Brunetière and Bourde had levelled at the Symbolists.

Both Moréas and Delaroche quote Poe, a writer whose works were read and admired by Gide in 1890, in order to differentiate between gratuitous obscurity and the Symbolists' search for indirect expression in art:

Deux choses sont éternellement requises: l'une, une certaine somme de complexité, ou mieux de combinaison: l'autre, une certaine quantité d'esprit suggestif, quelque chose comme un courant souterrain de pensée, non visible, indéfini. . . . C'est l'excès dans l'expression du sens qui ne doit être qu'insinué; c'est la manie de faire du courant souterrain d'une oeuvre le courant visible et supérieur qui change en prose de la plate espèce la prétendue poésie de quelques soi-disant poètes.<sup>32</sup>

The work of art based on these premisses will appear obscure and meaningless only to the casual reader, for its sense and unity lie not on the surface, as in the Naturalists' art,

<sup>31</sup> Cahiers André Gide I, p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 16.

but in an underlying current of suggestion. This view of art, with its emphasis on the suggestive power of composition, was one to which Gide subscribed both before and after his reading of Delaroché's article in 1891. One finds, for example, an echo of Poe's "courant souterrain de pensée" in Gide's definition of the work of art in his "Réflexions sur quelques points de littérature et de morale" of 1897:

Une oeuvre bien composée est nécessairement symbolique. Autour de quoi viendraient se grouper les parties? qui guiderait leur ordonnance? sinon l'idée de l'oeuvre, qui fait cette ordonnance symbolique.<sup>33</sup>

Lest it be thought that Gide's view was formed only after his association with the Symbolist school, a passage from the Cahiers d'André Walter should be borne in mind:

La vérité voudrait, je crois, qu'il n'y ait pas de conclusion: elle doit ressortir du récit même, sans qu'il soit besoin d'une péripétie qui la fasse flagrante. Jamais les choses ne se concluent: c'est l'homme qui tire les conclusions des choses.<sup>34</sup>

One finds here the same desire for suggestion and for the truth to reside in the flow of the narrative rather than in a conclusion. The work of art is a "démonstration"<sup>35</sup> in the sense of a presentation of evidence, not in the sense of a logically constructed series of arguments. It is the reader's

<sup>33</sup> O.C. II, p. 424.

<sup>34</sup> O.C. I, p. 95. It is interesting to note, however, that in 1891 Gide considered writing an explanation of the Cahiers d'André Walter but was dissuaded from doing so by Marcel Drouin. Cf. Ireland, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> O.C. I, p. 94.

responsibility to find the current of truth which underlies the facts recounted in the work, and to do this he must make an effort similar to that of the artist seeking the essential truth behind the phenomena of external reality.

Such an approach to art entails the obvious risk of the artist's being charged with seeking obscurity for its own sake. There is a fine dividing-line between the subtle use of symbolism as defined above and deliberate hermeticism, and it is not surprising that Gide, ignorant of the theories of the Symbolists as he appeared to be, should see the latter rather than the former. The efforts of the Symbolist poets to put these theories into practice, as we have seen, had left critics such as Brunetière dissatisfied and still awaiting the Symbolist "chef-d'oeuvre."<sup>36</sup> Nor, indeed, were the theorists such as Moréas blameless in the eyes of contemporary critics. One finds, for example, an article by Anatole France in the January, 1891, issue of La Plume where he writes of Moréas's manifesto of 1885:

Il y montra plus de curiosité d'art et de goût de forme que d'esprit critique et de philosophie.<sup>37</sup>

Gide's ignorance of the Symbolists' aims and his consequent criticisms of the school would thus seem to be due not only

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<sup>36</sup>F. Brunetière, "Symbolistes et Décadents," Revue des Deux Mondes, November 1, 1888, p. 226: "... on les attend toujours à la preuve de leurs théories, par le chef-d'oeuvre . . . ."

<sup>37</sup>A. France, "La Poésie nouvelle: Jean Moréas," La Plume, No. 41, January 1, 1891, p. 2.

to the poets' inability to put theory into practice but also to the lack of a clear formulation of the theory itself. The first of these lacunae was filled in late 1890 by his discovery of Mallarmé's poetry, and the second by his reading of Delaroche's article.

If Delaroche's article suggested to Gide that his criticism of the Symbolists on the grounds of formalism and obscurity might be unfounded, it seems to have been no less successful in refuting the charge of turning away from life. Indeed, by answering the first criticism it had already made inroads into the third, since formalism can be regarded as an implied subordination of concern for the realities of life to primarily linguistic and stylistic preoccupations. In the latter part of his article Delaroche sets out to show the error of those critics who claimed that the Symbolists moved only in realms divorced from the reality of contemporary life, that "de par notre conception artistique, 'le monde moderne nous est interdit'."<sup>38</sup> In order to do so he draws a parallel between the Symbolists' theory of the symbol and the work of contemporary scientists:

La science moderne a prouvé que le monde extérieur n'était qu'une manifestation de l'énergie, le lieu des symboles sensoriels, l'opacité de nos représentations.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Indeed, with the development of the molecular theory of matter, nineteenth century physicists had shown that objects could not be defined solely in terms of their external appearance but were in a constant state of flux behind the apparently unchanging exterior. In the second half of the century the relationship between matter and energy was also being investigated, and the hypothesis was already being advanced that matter and energy were essentially two forms of the same thing and that natural phenomena were purely manifestations of energy. Thus, the Leipzig professor of chemistry Wilhelm Ostwald wrote, for example:

Ce que nous entendons trouve son origine dans le travail accompli sur le tympan et dans l'oreille moyenne par les vibrations de l'air. . . Ce que nous voyons est seulement de l'énergie de rayonnement qui effectue un travail chimique sur la rétine, et qui est perçue comme lumière. . . . De ce point de vue, l'ensemble de la nature apparaît comme une série de phénomènes énergétiques changeant dans le temps et dans l'espace et dont nous avons connaissance dans la mesure où ils influent sur notre organisme . . . . 40

Ostwald's hypothesis would certainly seem to justify Dela-  
roche's suggestion that to the eye of the scientist the  
objects of the external world are only the forms in which  
the elemental energy of the universe exposes itself to human  
perception at a specific point in time and space. Of greater  
interest, however, are the aesthetic conclusions which Dela-  
roche draws in the name of Symbolism. Whereas the energy

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<sup>40</sup> Quoted in *Les Métamorphoses de l'humanité: le réalisme*, ed. R. Philippe, Paris, Editions Planète, 1968, p. 87.



manifested by a concrete object is regarded by the scientist as another physical phenomenon, Delaroche makes use of the ambiguity of the term to bring the whole question within the scope of artistic imagination and intuition:

Derrière chaque forme transitoire, le poète doit donc percevoir la force, l'énergie, l'âme qui crée perpétuellement des phantasmes et demeure une et identique en son principe.<sup>41</sup>

The energy on which the universe is founded has now taken on the spiritual, mystical connotations of "l'âme," of Moréas's "Idée," Hegel's Absolute and Schopenhauer's Will, and it is the poet's duty to seek this creative force by means of the "symboles sensoriels" through which it manifests itself to him.

It is interesting to note that Delaroche, in his exposition of the Symbolists' attitude to reality, does not fall victim to what Lehmann calls "the solipsist myth"<sup>42</sup> which characterised many Symbolist followers of Schopenhauer. Brunetière defined the trap of solipsism into which many Symbolists fell when he discussed the common erroneous interpretation of Amiel's dictum: "Un paysage est un état de l'âme":

<sup>41</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> A.G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France, 1885-1895, 2nd Edition, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1968, p. 41. Specific examples of this misinterpretation of Schopenhauer are given on pages 40-41 of this work.

Cela ne veut pas dire, comme je vois pourtant qu'on le croit, qu'un paysage change d'aspect avec l'état d'âme . . . selon que nous sommes tristes ou joyeux nous-mêmes. Il n'y aurait rien de plus banal, et surtout de moins hégélien.<sup>43</sup>

Delaroché, who quotes Brunetière's article frequently in his exposition of the Symbolist credo, may well have been led to avoid the error of his contemporaries by the latter's warning, for the view of the universe which he proposes owes little to solipsism. Although the representation of reality may be ours, it is nevertheless imposed upon us:

Ces apparences qui obéissent aux mystérieuses lois du changement, nous ne sommes pas maîtres de les modifier à notre gré: elles s'imposent à nous comme l'illusion la plus forte, mais seulement comme telle.<sup>44</sup>

Delaroché's acceptance of the fact that external reality exists independently of the perceiver, even if it appears as no more than an illusion to our eyes, is in agreement with Brunetière, but poses a problem regarding Gide's enthusiastic reception of the article in La Plume as "une apologie directe de mon livre," for Gide, as Lehmann points out, appears to have been just as much a victim of the solipsist myth as other Symbolists.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, it would be difficult to find a better example of the solipsism which characterised the Symbolists than André Walter's interpretation of Schopenhauer's

<sup>43</sup> Brunetière, art. cit., p. 217.

<sup>44</sup> Delaroché, art. cit., p. 19.

<sup>45</sup> Lehmann, op. cit., p. 41.

"Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung":

Ce qui connaît tout et n'est connu de personne, c'est le Sujet. Il est donc le support du monde . . . .  
Quelles exaltations. Crier à pleine voix cette phrase et se plonger dans cette pensée orgueilleuse.<sup>46</sup>

If André Walter's hybris reflected accurately Gide's attitude to reality, then it would be surprising to find the latter accepting an article which disagreed with him on such a fundamental issue. However, it has been pointed out by more than one authority that Gide and Walter are not one and the same.<sup>47</sup> Gide's view of reality was not as simple as that suggested by his creation, and will be investigated in detail in the following chapters. Suffice it to say, at this juncture, that by 1894 Gide had developed a viewpoint similar to that expressed by both Brunetière and Delaroche and that at the time of the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter there were already signs that the solipsistic attitude of Walter was being accompanied and corrected in Gide by the realisation that external reality did not depend for its existence on his consciousness of it and that he could not control it. In his preface to the second edition of Le Voyage d'Urien in 1894 Gide repeats Amiel's statement in his own terms, "Qui dit

<sup>46</sup> O.C. I, p. 100.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ireland, op. cit., p. 26. One might also quote Gide himself as stating that he differed from his characters by having ". . . ce peu de bon sens qui me retient de pousser aussi loin qu'eux leurs folies." Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs, O.C. XIII, p. 52.

émotion dira donc paysage," but qualifies it thus:

Emotion, paysage ne seront plus dès lors liés par rapport de cause à effet, mais bien par cette connexion indéfinissable, où plus de créancier et plus de débiteur . . . .<sup>48</sup>

Here the relationship between the perceiving consciousness and reality is not one of cause and effect but rather the coming together of two autonomous entities. The aesthetic conclusion which Delaroche and the Symbolists drew from this position was that the role of the artist was to explore the affinities between his soul and external reality in order to attain a deeper knowledge of the nature of existence. This attitude to art was noted clearly by Brunetière in his article on the Symbolists in 1888:

. . . cela veut dire qu'entre la nature et nous il y a des 'correspondances', des 'affinités' latentes, des 'identités' mystérieuses, et que ce n'est qu'autant que nous les saisissons que, pénétrant à l'intérieur des choses, nous en pouvons vraiment approcher l'âme. Voilà le principe du symbolisme, voilà le point de départ de tous les mysticismes . . . .<sup>49</sup>

Brunetière's analysis of the aims of Symbolism, with its reference to mysticism, gives a more balanced view than does Delaroche's emphasis on the "scientific" conception of art as a means of exploration of the nature of reality. One suspects that the reason for the difference in emphasis might lie in the fact that Delaroche's article was less an exercise

<sup>48</sup> Romans, p. 1464.

<sup>49</sup> Brunetière, art. cit., pp. 217-218.

in literary criticism than a form of propaganda aimed at endowing the Symbolists with some respectability. While Brunetière sees the mysticism inherent in Symbolism as a healthy antidote to the "lourde masse du naturalisme,"<sup>50</sup> Delaroche looks on it as a source of criticism of his school. He thus places less emphasis on the mystical qualities of the Symbolists' idealism than on the more "scientific" elements. In so doing, he accentuates those aspects most likely to counter the type of criticism which Gide expressed in his letter to Valéry, that is the accusation that the Symbolists' art was a purposeless form of "l'Art pour l'Art" totally divorced from the reality of life.

Delaroche's insistence on the "scientific" explanation of the Symbolists' theories is continued in the last part of his article where he discusses their views on the significance of the formal aspects of poetry. Up to this point he has attempted to counter the various criticisms levelled at the Symbolist school, and has shown that the Symbolists' theories are "modern" inasmuch as their view of art and reality is based on the scientific theory that matter is a concrete manifestation of energy. It is but a short step from this view of inanimate nature to the psychologist's view of human behaviour as the manifestation of psychic energy, and Delaroche at least suggests this. It is this section which seems

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 218.



most likely to have made the greatest impact on Gide, whose Journal entries of November, 1890, bear ample witness to his interest in his own identity and its manifestation in his behaviour.

Poetry, Delaroche claims, is in the eyes of the Symbolists "une vision spéciale des choses, un état d'âme original."<sup>51</sup> He thus moves the centre of interest away from the object perceived and places it in the consciousness which perceives. The possibility thus arises of poetry's being used as a means not only of investigating the nature of external reality but also of exploring the internal reality of the poet through the affinities between it and the "paysage."

It is through rhythm that these affinities find expression and come to the attention of the artist:

C'est par le rythme que l'art prend conscience de l'unité des apparences, c'est lui qui extériorise en symboles éternels l'enchaînement des lois universelles, abscondes sous la complexité des phénomènes.<sup>52</sup>

However, this rhythm is not the architecturally structured rhythm of classical verse. It expresses the essential unity, which lies in the realm of the ideal, of the diverse phenomena of the real world. Although Moréas is quoted by Delaroche as defining it, in a remarkably Gidean turn of phrase,

<sup>51</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

as "un désordre savamment ordonné,"<sup>53</sup> it has special musical qualities unrelated to classical verse:

... quand le rythme s'accroît de sonorités, comme dans le langage, il devient la musique, musique spéciale, certes, de sons articulés.<sup>54</sup>

Obviously the rhythm sought by the Symbolists is not solely that which pleases the ear through the felicitous juxtaposition of words, for it is only when the underlying rhythm has been clothed with language that it becomes music. The aim of the Symbolist poet is to give expression to the rhythm of the affinities inherent in the ideal unity which lies behind the phenomena of real life. Delaroche quotes Carlyle on this point:

Musical! que de choses tiennent en cela! une pensée musicale est une pensée parlée par un esprit qui a pénétré dans le plus intime de la chose, qui en a découvert le mystère le plus intérieur. . . .  
Voyez profondément, et vous verrez musicalement.<sup>55</sup>

Carlyle's statement in itself does no more than propose the rhythmic, musical quality of poetry as a means of achieving the Symbolist goal, which we have already noted, of attaining

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 17. Cf. André Walter's approach to the creation of his work: "Donc, pour Allain, l'évolution des passions doit être si savamment ordonnée qu'elles se révèlent l'une à l'autre et s'éclairent réciproquement comme par un mutuel reflet" (O.C. I, p. 110). The same view is given years later in *Incidences*: "L'oeuvre classique ne sera forte et belle qu'en raison de son romantisme dompté" (p. 38).

<sup>54</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

the essential reality which lies behind the external world of appearances. Delaroche, however, uses the quotation to return to, and expand upon a point which he had suggested at the beginning of his article in his reference to Verlaine

"qui avait, le premier, trouvé la musicale expression de toute la mélancolie mystique et sensuelle de l'âme moderne."<sup>56</sup>

For the Symbolists, rhythm was to be used to explore the inner reality of the poet as well as the essence of external reality:

Il fallait, pour circonscrire le rêve, non plus le vers classique, aux arrêtes [sic] fixes et conçu sur un type invariable, . . . mais un vers, une strophe, dont l'unité fût plutôt psychique que syllabique, et variable, en nombre et en durée, selon les nécessités musicales . . . . De là, la création du vers, appelé à tort vers libre, puisque tous ses éléments s'ordonnent selon les nécessités logiques, et ne comportent aucun arbitraire.<sup>57</sup>

The emphasis here is not on the object, as it was with Carlyle, but on the dream, the inner reaction of the poet on his encounter with the object. The "vers libre," which expresses this reaction, is free only inasmuch as it is not restricted by the formal considerations of classical versification. It is determined by the "nécessités musicales," by those elements in his inner self which are brought to consciousness by their affinity to aspects of the "paysage." The unity of the work of art does not depend on purely formal

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

factors, but rather the "psychical," or, to use the modern term, the psychological framework to which the form is applied.

Delaroché can thus argue again that the Symbolists, far from being divorced from modern life, are in tune with the latest developments in the scientific world, in this case with reference to psychology which was at that time in the process of establishing itself as an autonomous field of interest independent of philosophy:

Nous nous bornerons à remarquer, en passant, pour ceux qui nous reprochent de n'être pas 'modernes', que la poésie ainsi comprise rentre, au contraire, dans le grand courant de l'évolution psychique moderne, voire contemporaine, où le sens musical a acquis de si prodigieux développements.<sup>58</sup>

Poetry, in this view, is not merely a means of expression, but a means of discovery, revealing to both poet and reader not only the significance of the universe but also the depth of their own consciousness.

One can well understand Gide's change of attitude on reading this exposé of the Symbolist theory, for it does indeed seem to form an apologia for the Cahiers d'André Walter. We have already noted the similarity between Gide and Moréas in their pronouncements on rhythm,<sup>59</sup> and between Gide and Verlaine on what is expressed in their works.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> See above, pp. 28-29.

<sup>60</sup> See above, p. 15.

In the latter part of his article Delaroche, with his suggestion of art as a form of psychological exploration, confirms the intentions of André Walter for his projected work,

Allain:

Un personnage seulement, et encore un quelconque, ou plutôt son cerveau, n'est que le lieu commun où le drame se livre, le champ clos où les adversaires s'assailent.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, Delaroche's view that the unity of a work of art should be created by the underlying psychological or ideational structure reflects the construction of the Cahiers d'André Walter which is noted by G.W. Ireland in reference to Walter's unexpected desire for a rigid structure for

Allain:

"L'ordonnance de Spinoza pour l'Ethique, la transposer dans le Roman! les lignes géométriques. Un roman c'est un théorème." But these are ideal lines. They are not artistic forms.<sup>62</sup>

Walter's wish for rigid lines is indeed less surprising when it is understood that these are lines of ideas which will serve as props for a profusion of poetic form:

Je voudrais la forme si lyrique et si frémissante que la poésie en profuse, malgré les lignes si rigides. O ces lignes droites! - des échelas! mais je voudrais, s'enroulant autour, des volubilis et des folles vignes.<sup>63</sup>

The sense which Delaroche gives to musicality in poetry again conforms to that which André Walter seeks in his proposed novel:

<sup>61</sup>O.C. I, p. 95.

<sup>62</sup>Ireland, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>63</sup>O.C. I, p. 96.

La forme lyrique, la strophe - mais sans mètres ni rimes - scandée, balancée seulement - musicale plutôt. Et non point tant l'harmonie des mots que la musique des pensées - car elles ont aussi leurs allitérations mystérieuses.<sup>64</sup>

The emphasis here, as in Delaroche's statement regarding the "vers libre,"<sup>65</sup> is not on the rhythm of words or of sounds, but rather on the harmony of the ideas embodied in the poetry. This suggests that Gide might well have shared the Symbolists' view that art, through its exploration of the affinities between the artist's psyche and external reality, was a mode of knowledge of equal validity to philosophy or psychology.

Of further attraction to Gide, whose Journal entries of November, 1890, testify to his search for authenticity,<sup>66</sup> is the consequence for the poet of this attitude to art. In order to fulfil this role of explorer of the harmonies of the universe the poet, Delaroche declares, must strive to achieve sincerity:

Or, que veulent les écrivains actuels? - Edifier enfin l'art sur ses bases logiques et nécessaires; en bannir tout le parasitisme et le faux-semblant qui, sous les plus fallacieux dehors, s'y étaient subrepticement glissés. Et, pour ce, remonter aux sources, à toutes les sources: de l'étymologie, de la langue, du rythme, de la vraie conception poétique.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> See above, p. 30.

<sup>66</sup> Journal I, p. 18.

<sup>67</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19.



Art, in this view, should be pure, authentic and untainted by extraneous considerations such as, Delaroche is surely suggesting, the realist theories of the Naturalists and the devotion to form of the Parnassiens. It would seem then that art should be based on the personal vision of the poet instead of on external reality, and expressed in a language and form much less refined and much more authentic than that of Leconte de Lisle and his followers. However, Delaroche's suggestion that the basis of art is necessary and logical implies an element of determinism which seems to conflict with the freedom of the individual artist to give his own personal view of reality. It also seems to contradict Delaroche's earlier quotation from Moréas's "Un Manifeste littéraire":

La conception du roman symbolique est polymorphe: dédaigneux de la Méthode puérile du Naturalisme, il édifie une oeuvre de déformation subjective, fort de cet axiome: que l'art ne saurait chercher en l'objectif qu'un simple point de départ extrêmement succinct.<sup>68</sup>

Gide, in Paludes, echoes this conception of art:

. . . les événements racontés ne conservent pas entre eux les valeurs qu'ils avaient dans la vie. Pour rester vrai on est obligé d'arranger. L'important, c'est que j'indique l'émotion qu'ils me donnent.<sup>69</sup>

Both of these statements suggest that art is the artist's individual reorganisation of the raw material

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>69</sup> O.C. I, p. 393.

presented by existence. This would certainly seem to exclude all idea of control from without. For Moréas, external reality is no more than a starting point and will be "deformed" by the artist, while for Gide the centre of interest lies in his reaction to it rather than in the outside world itself. This does not, however, conflict with the idea of determinism implicit in Delarocche's attitude, for necessity can come from within just as well as from without. The manner in which the artist transforms external reality will necessarily be determined by the nature of his psyche. We seem here to be close to the concept of psychological determinism and to a suggestion of the importance of the unconscious as a factor in the psyche, a viewpoint which, in these pre-Freudian times, is couched in metaphysical rather than in psychoanalytical terms. Lehmann, in discussing Hartmann's influence on Laforgue, defines the development of the psychological from the metaphysical concept. Firstly, he points out that Hartmann, whose Philosophie des Unbewussten was published in 1869, saw the unconscious as "not primarily an integral part of the individual mind-body structure, but a metaphysical entity--a transcendental principle, in the succession of Fichte's Ego, Hegel's Idea, or Schopenhauer's Will."<sup>70</sup> He notes, however, how close this metaphysical concept is to the Freudian idea of the unconscious, when he goes

<sup>70</sup> Lehmann, op. cit., p. 115.

on to discuss inspiration: "... the Unconscious implants somehow or other greater and more valuable sensations in the inspired artist for him to spy out: his task is simply to appreciate this fact and transcribe them."<sup>71</sup> The final step is to suggest the existence of some part of the mind in which the unconscious implants its sensations, and this Lehmann does when he discusses Laforgue's views: "Laforgue wants his art to reproduce on the conscious level the 'feelings' in the unconscious level of the mind."<sup>72</sup>

In this conception of art, as in psychoanalysis, conscious preoccupations form a barrier to the revelation of the essential self, and it is in this sense that subjectivity can be looked on as "parasitisme" and "faux-semblant" which detract from the authenticity required by the work of art as a manifestation of the Absolute. Gide makes the point in his Journal entry of November, 1890, that this type of subjectivity, the type which takes extraneous factors into consideration and which he calls "égoïsme,"<sup>73</sup> is detrimental to the work of art:

Ne jamais perdre de vue le but. Ne jamais préférer le moyen. . . . Se considérer soi-même comme un moyen; donc ne jamais se préférer au but choisi, à l'oeuvre.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Journal I, p. 18: "Songer à son salut: égoïsme."

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Looked at from a twentieth century, post-Freudian viewpoint, this statement might be interpreted as a demand for the conscious self to be subordinated to the work which is the expression of the subconscious, essential self. One should be careful, however, not to overemphasise Gide's interest in art as a means of exploring the subconscious. Although the later preoccupation of the Surrealists with the subconscious is present in an embryonic form, it is still regarded as but one aspect, however important it may be for Gide, of the wider search for the truth underlying existence in general. It should be noted that in his Journal entry the final goal for him is the work itself, and that there is no mention of the role which the work of art can play in the artist's life by its revelation of his true nature.<sup>75</sup> There is a

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. G. Brée, André Gide, l'insaisissable Protée, 2nd edition, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1970, p. 15. Besides pointing out that the work of art is for Gide the "point d'arrivée," Mme Brée rejects any idea that Gide can be compared to the Surrealists, and this for two reasons. Firstly, because Gide, after the Cahiers d'André Walter, never confused the realms of art and of life, and because "[s]on oeuvre ne se propose pas de buts 'ultra-littéraires'." We would agree with this viewpoint, but would argue that it does not invalidate our suggestion that part of the attraction for Gide of the Symbolist theory was its proposal of art as a means of discovering the essential self. For the Surrealists the exploration of the subconscious was an a priori intention, while for Gide self-knowledge was a product which the Cahiers d'André Walter had brought to his attention a posteriori, and was by no means a deliberate aim. Indeed, if such had been his purpose, it would have been precisely the kind of conscious preoccupation which he condemns as "égoïsme" in his Journal entry above. Mme Brée's second argument is based on the contrast between the spontaneous disorder of the Surrealists' works, culminating in their experimentation with

determinism, but not specifically psychological determinism, in the entry which ends with Gide's posing the question as to what his work of art should manifest:

(Ici lacune, où se pose la question du choix de l'oeuvre et du libre choix de cette oeuvre. Pour manifester. Mais encore . . . . Peut-on choisir?) <sup>76</sup>

The question of the freedom of choice of the artist is left unanswered, and even in the Traité du Narcisse in 1891, where Gide seems to be stating explicitly that art can serve the purpose of self-discovery, his attitude is ambivalent:

Le poète pieux contemple; il se penche sur les symboles, et silencieux descend profondément au coeur des choses, - et quand il a perçu, visionnaire, l'idée, l'intime Nombre harmonieux de son Être, qui soutient la forme imparfaite, il la saisit, puis . . . il sait lui redonner une forme éternelle, sa Forme véritable, enfin, et fatale . . . .<sup>77</sup>

Here the passive contemplation of the poet is followed by a gesture: "il le saisit," which in turn leads to the creative act of giving his form to the Idea. However, the freedom of the artist is only apparent, for the form which he gives to the Idea, its manifestation in the work of art, is determined and eternal, and his subjectivity is no more than a vehicle

automatic writing, and the meticulous construction of Gide's art. This point, too, is of great importance for this thesis, as it is hoped to show that the discipline which characterises the construction of Gide's works contributes to the expression of the whole man, and not just to that part of him which lies hidden in the subconscious.

<sup>76</sup> Journal I, p. 18.

<sup>77</sup> O.C. I, p. 217.

for its expression:

—En lui, lentement, l'Idée se repose, puis lucide  
s'épanouit hors des heures.<sup>78</sup>

The importance for Gide of Delaroche's exposé of Symbolist theories lay, we would suggest, in three main points. Firstly, Delaroche produced, in his linking of the Symbolists' artistic endeavours to contemporary scientific activities, a successful defence against the charges of obscurity and of divorce from the realities of life which Gide, in the company of many critics of the time, levelled at the Symbolists. Secondly, the Symbolist credo seemed to embrace tendencies which, we will suggest, characterised Gide in 1890. One finds, for example, the apparent coexistence of subjectivity and objectivity, of freedom and determinism, of the egocentric and the aliocentric, of active artistic creation and passive contemplation, and not least we find, in Moréas's definition of Symbolist form as "un désordre savamment ordonné," the reconciliation of the spontaneous disorder of inspiration and the disciplined order of expression which it is intended to show was of crucial importance in the role which art played in Gide's life. Finally, Delaroche's suggestion that art could serve as a mode of knowledge not only of the essence of external reality but also of the internal reality of the artist both confirmed and clarified the conclusions which, we will see, Gide drew from the experience

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter.

In addition to these theoretical reasons for Gide's identification with the Symbolists there is one practical factor which should not be ignored. Brunetière, according to Delaroche, while denying the Symbolists credit for any material contribution to the development of literature, suggested nevertheless that they had prepared the way for an artistic revolution:

. . . M. Brunetière . . . apprécia les Symbolistes, plutôt dans leur influence, disait-il, que pour leur mérite personnel ou leurs œuvres qu'on attendait encore (?) Il constatait que cette influence correspondait à une révolution prochaine du goût littéraire.<sup>79</sup>

This statement that the Symbolists, although having created the theoretical conditions in which art could move forward, were unable themselves to produce works of value must indeed have given food for thought to Gide. He had just completed his first major work and his ambition in the field of literature was, he admits in Si le grain ne meurt, considerable.<sup>80</sup> Given this ambition it is not surprising that Gide, on finding that his Cahiers d'André Walter conformed so closely to the Symbolists' theories, should propose himself as a leader in the sphere of the Symbolist novel:

<sup>79</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 18.

<sup>80</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 250: "Je ne veux point me peindre plus vertueux que je ne suis: j'ai passionnément désiré la gloire."



Donc Mallarmé pour la poésie, Maeterlinck pour le drame - et quoique auprès d'eux deux je me sente un peu gringalet, j'ajoute Moi pour le roman.<sup>81</sup>

The theoretical and the practical would seem to have conspired to bring Gide into the Symbolist fold. It is now intended to study the factors in Gide's life and personality which led him to produce a work such as the Cahiers d'André Walter and to evolve a view of reality and art which would allow him to identify with the Symbolist theory as presented by Delaroche.

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<sup>81</sup>Correspondance, p. 46.

## CHAPTER II

### GIDE'S ATTITUDE TO REALITY

Gide's attitude to reality as he prepared to write the Cahiers d'André Walter in 1890 was a troubled one. Indeed, he had reached a point where he could see nothing in the future for him except the possibility of madness or death:

... après, c'était la mort, la folie, je ne sais quoi de vide et d'affreux vers quoi je précipitais avec moi mon héros.<sup>1</sup>

At the root of his anguish lay what appears to be an inherent inability to feel totally in tune with the reality about him. In "Ainsi soit-il," which he continued to write until six days before his death, he notes that this is a characteristic of which he has been aware throughout his life, but which he still finds difficult to explain fully:

Je prends intérêt, je prétends même parfois prendre part à "ce qui arrive"; mais, à vrai dire, il faut bien que je l'avoue: je ne parviens pas réellement à y croire. Je ne sais comment expliquer cela, qui, je pense, pour un lecteur très perspicace, doit déjà ressortir de mes écrits (et que j'ai, du reste, explicitement noté parfois): je ne colle pas, je n'ai jamais pu parfaitement coller avec la réalité.<sup>2</sup>

Gide indeed describes this strangely incomplete relationship with his physical surroundings on more than one occasion

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<sup>1</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 247.

<sup>2</sup>Journal II, p. 1226.

during his career, the most illuminating attempt to define it being his Journal entry of December 20, 1924. Here he begins by pointing out that his feeling of having an imperfect grasp of reality is not due, simply to his being unaware of what is happening around him. On the contrary, he can be very conscious of and interested in what is going on, and yet still feel a sense of unreality:

. . . . cela ne peut être attribué à quelque défaut d'attention, ou d'intérêt. Mon intérêt pour chaque individu reste des plus vifs . . . . Je crois que cela vient plutôt d'un certain sens de la réalité, qui me manque. Je puis être extrêmement sensible au monde extérieur, mais je ne parviens jamais parfaitement à y croire.<sup>3</sup>

Nor is his disbelief metaphysical, philosophical or intellectual in origin:

Et je ne fais pas de métaphysique. Je me défends d'être mystique et mon intelligence ne donne son adhésion ni à Kant, ni à Platon. C'est autre chose. Je ne m'inquiète pas de savoir si je crois, oui ou non, au monde extérieur; ce n'est pas non plus une question d'intelligence: c'est le sentiment de la réalité que je n'ai pas.<sup>4</sup>

Gide does not state what he means either by the "sentiment de la réalité" or by the "sens de la réalité," but the use of these two terms in the same attempt at definition, while conveying his perplexity, does succeed partially in communicating what he feels is missing. The use of both "sens" and "sentiment" leaves us with the impression that the element which

<sup>3</sup> Journal I, p. 799.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 801.

he lacks is the ability to evaluate the meaning, consequential or emotional, which external reality has for him.

This impression is strengthened by the consideration of examples which Gide gives of his singular relationship to reality. In his Journal entry of December 20, 1924, he describes an incident which took place when, at the age of eighteen, he was travelling in a coach in Brittany. Looking up from his reading, Gide saw that the coachman had slipped from his seat and was about to fall under the wheels of the coach. Gide rescued the man, but in his description of the incident adds:

. . . je me souviens de l'état bizarre où je me découvris. Ce fut une sorte de brusque révélation sur moi-même. Je ne ressentais pas la moindre émotion; simplement, j'étais extraordinairement intéressé (amusé serait plus exacte), très apte du reste à parer, capable de réflexes appropriés, etc. Mais assistant à tout cela comme à un spectacle en dehors de la réalité. Et l'accident me serait arrivé à moi-même qu'il en eût été exactement de même; car vous n'allez pas voir là une marque d'insensibilité.<sup>5</sup>

According to this account, Gide is aware of himself on the one hand and of external reality on the other. However, once the idea of Gide's being an unemotional type has been discounted, the lack of emotion and the objectivity implied by his amused interest suggest that he is aware of them only separately. He appears to be incapable of relating one to the other, either by feeling fear for the coachman or for himself.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 800.

One might expect this attitude to be a result of "dédoublement," whereby Gide divides himself into the contemplator, who is safe on the sidelines, and the actor, who is at risk but is seen as "other." Indeed, this is suggested here by the use of terms such as "assister" and "spectacle." However, in "Ainsi soit-il" Gide claims that this is not so:

Il n'y a même pas, à proprement parler, dédoublement qui fasse que, en moi, quelqu'un reste spectateur de celui qui agit. Non: c'est celui même qui agit, ou qui souffre, qui ne se prend pas au sérieux. Je crois même que, à l'article de la mort, je me dirai: tiens! il meurt.<sup>6</sup>

The subject does not become object, but rather remains aware of its identity as a single consciousness. Actor and spectator are one, and are conscious of their unity, but do not seem able to appreciate the effect which the external world has on them.

In "Ainsi soit-il" Gide suggests that time plays a role in his attitude to reality:

Je crois qu'il faut rattacher cette déficience . . . à ce que je disais plus haut: celle du sentiment du temps. Quoi que ce soit qu'il m'advienne, ou qu'il advienne à autrui, je le mets aussitôt au passé . . . J'enterre les gens et les choses, et moi-même, avec une facilité déconcertante: je n'en conserve (oh! malgré moi) que la signification.<sup>7</sup>

One wonders, however, if time is indeed the true issue here. What Gide is saying, we would suggest, is that present

<sup>6</sup>Journal II, pp. 1226-1227.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 1227.

reality appears to his consciousness as innocuous as events which are distant in time and which have no more power to affect him. He is left with no more than the dry, theoretical and unfeeling awareness of external reality. This latest statement confirms what all the others have suggested: Gide lacks the ability to achieve fully the normal subjective experiences of pleasure and pain, of anger, fear, sorrow, joy and love which lend colour, warmth and life to existence.

Here, for the first time, we see the total picture. If Gide cannot truly feel sorrow, equally he cannot feel joy; for every negative experience which he avoids there is a positive one to be regretted. His parenthetical expression of regret above indicates the importance of the debit side of the emotional ledger. It also suggests the danger which must accompany an attitude to reality such as Gide's. The feeling of some quality lacking in his life leads him to look beyond everyday existence for a superior realm:

Je ne suis jamais parvenu à prendre cette vie tout à fait au sérieux; non point que je n'aie jamais pu croire . . . à la vie éternelle . . . mais bien plutôt à une autre face de cette vie, laquelle échapperait à nos sens et dont nous ne pourrions prendre qu'une connaissance très imparfaite . . . .<sup>8</sup>

These words were written on July 28, 1929 when Gide was in his sixtieth year, but the intuition of a superior reality which they describe can be traced back to his childhood. In

<sup>8</sup>Journal I, p. 929.

Si le grain ne meurt Gide describes a form of reality which he experienced as a child and which differed from both waking reality and dreams:

. . . il y a la réalité et il y a les rêves; et puis il y a une seconde réalité.

La croyance indistincte, indéfinissable, à je ne sais quoi d'autre, à côté du réel, du quotidien, de l'avoué, m'habita durant nombre d'années . . . .<sup>9</sup>

This second reality has all the qualities which in real life Gide feels are lacking:

Rien n'a l'air coutumier; il me semble que je vais être initié tout à coup à une autre vie, mystérieuse, différemment réelle, plus brillante et plus pathétique . . . .<sup>10</sup>

The warmth, the colour and the emotion which he cannot appreciate in his waking hours become attainable in the "seconde réalité," which is the intermediate stage between waking and sleeping. Thus, the young Gide was vaguely aware of what was missing in his life and the "seconde réalité" was the first of many attempts to compensate:

. . . je crois bien qu'il y avait plutôt là un maladroit besoin d'épaissir la vie - besoin que la religion, plus tard, serait habile à contenter.<sup>11</sup>

This need to compensate for the inadequacies of everyday life is, we suggest, the key to understanding much of Gide's conduct as a child and as an adolescent. There is, however, an element of danger in it, for if the dissatisfaction

<sup>9</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, pp. 27-28.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 28.



with real life becomes too great, the temptation to reject reality for a dream world of one's own making may lead to complete alienation and madness. This is the fear which Gide expressed when he stated that he could see nothing beyond the Cahiers d'André Walter, and we can see a reflection of it in the warning which he put in the mouth of André Walter's mother: "Tu ne peux pas faire la vie à ton rêve; il faut que tu te fasses à la vie."<sup>12</sup> It is our intention to investigate Gide's tenuous hold on reality along with its concomitant temptation to create a substitute reality. We will also attempt to suggest an explanation of it and to show how it is reflected in the Cahiers d'André Walter.

Gide himself suggests that the reason for his partial grasp on reality is physiological in nature:

Je me figure qu'un très savant médecin saurait découvrir qu'une "glande à sécrétion interne," quelque "capsule surrénale" ou autre, est atrophiée chez moi.<sup>13</sup>

It is our intention to propose an alternative explanation based on certain elementary aspects of Freud's theory of the personality.<sup>14</sup> Our choice of Freud, rather than another

<sup>12</sup> O.C. I, p. 126.

<sup>13</sup> Journal I, p. 799.

<sup>14</sup> Our information on Freud's theories has been taken from two works: S. Freud, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis, translated and newly edited by J. Strachey, New York, Norton and Company Inc., 1969, and E. Hall and G. Lindzey, Theories of Personality, 2nd edition, New York, John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1970.

psychologist, is dictated simply by the fact that Gide himself remarked on the relevance of Freudian theory to his own case: "Freud. Le freudisme . . . . Depuis dix ans, quinze ans, j'en fais sans le savoir."<sup>15</sup> A further reason is that his approach does, in our view, seem to offer an acceptable explanation of Gide's life and literary effort.

Freud's theory suggests that the personality comprises three major systems: the id, the ego and the superego. The id is the original system of the personality and consists of everything psychological which is inherited and which is present at birth, including the instincts. It is the reservoir of psychic energy and provides power for the operation of the ego and the superego. It represents the inner world of subjective experience and has no knowledge of external reality. The ego is the system which carries out transactions between the organism and external reality, and in order to do this it has control over all the cognitive and intellectual functions. The ego also plays an executive role in the personality and thus has to try to integrate the often conflicting demands of the id, the superego and the external world:

An action by the ego is as it should be if it satisfies simultaneously the demands of the id, of the super-ego and of reality - that is to say, if it is able to reconcile their demands with one another.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Journal I, p. 729.

<sup>16</sup> S. Freud, op. cit., p. 3.

The third of the systems of the personality is the superego.

Freud describes it thus:

The long period of childhood, during which the growing human being lives in dependence on his parents, leaves behind it as a precipitate the formation in his ego of a special agency in which this parental influence is prolonged. It has received the name of super-ego. In so far as this super-ego is differentiated from the ego or is opposed to it, it constitutes a third power which the ego must take into account.<sup>17</sup>

The main function of the superego is the limitation of satisfaction, that is, it attempts to inhibit the impulses of the id. In a healthy personality the three systems work in an integrated manner under the administrative control of the ego.

The second main point in Freud's theory which we wish to consider is the question of psychic energy. This energy, we have seen, originates in the id, but is also utilised by the other two systems. Since the amount of psychic energy is a limited quantity, the id, the ego and the superego must compete for what is available. The ego uses some of the psychic energy which it controls in order to gratify the instincts. At the same time, however, it must use energy to restrain the instinctual demands of the id. A similar relationship exists between ego and superego, the ego using energy not only to forward the aims of the superego but also to erect defences against excessive demands by it. It is thus that the ego, as executive of the personality, uses

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

psychic energy in order to effect an integration among the three systems. The result of this integration of the id, the ego and the superego is an inner harmony which allows the ego's transactions with the external world to be carried out smoothly and effectively. If, however, the superego is weak, the id will threaten to take control of the personality and cause the person to act in an impulsive and irrational manner. This threat can lead to the ego's being flooded with anxiety, which could be of either the neurotic or the moral type. Neurotic anxiety, according to Hall and Lindzey, is "the fear that the instincts will get out of control and cause the person to do something for which he will be punished."<sup>18</sup> It is not so much fear of the instincts as fear of the punishment which is likely to follow their gratification. Moral anxiety has the same basic concern with the instincts, but differs from neurotic anxiety in that the fear is not of punishment from without, but fear of the conscience. Whatever the kind of anxiety, the reaction of the ego is the same: "Under the pressure of excessive anxiety, the ego is sometimes forced to take extreme measures to relieve the pressure. These measures are called defense mechanisms."<sup>19</sup> Principal among these defence mechanisms of the ego is repression, a procedure in which the ego forces the instinctual

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<sup>18</sup> Hall and Lindzey, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

demand out of consciousness and back into the unconscious. The defence mechanisms of the ego, however, demand the expenditure on its part of a considerable amount of energy. It is the fact that the amount of psychic energy available is more or less limited, and that it must be shared by the three systems of the personality, which introduces the possibility of pathological states such as neurosis and psychosis. Freud suggests how this may happen:

We may suspect that, in the economic conflicts which arise at this point, the id and the super-ego often make common cause against the hard-pressed ego which tries to cling to reality in order to retain its normal state.<sup>20</sup>

He goes on to suggest that if, in the "economic warfare" over psychic energy, the id and the superego in their struggle demand control of too much, then there will not be enough for the ego to maintain its normal relationship to reality.

The above considerations are the aspects of Freud's theory of the personality to which we will refer in our search for an explanation of Gide's behaviour in his childhood and his adolescence. Encouragement to do so comes from Gide's Journal entry of July 28, 1929, in which he sees the origin of his tenuous hold on reality as lying in his childhood years:

Cette première éducation chrétienne, irrémédiablement, me décolla de ce monde, m'inculquant, non point sans

<sup>20</sup> S. Freud, op. cit., p. 29.

doute un dégoût de cette terre, mais bien une incroyance à sa réalité.<sup>21</sup>

Thus Gide feels that it is environmental factors rather than hereditary ones which have played the greater part in the development of his attitude to reality.<sup>22</sup> His reference to his christian education lays the blame squarely on his upbringing, and in particular on the implantation in him of moral values. In other words, the formation of his superego plays a significant rôle in determining his relationship to reality. It is therefore our intention to examine at this point the conditions under which his superego was created.

The superego, we have seen, is formed by the child's internalising the moral values proposed by his parents. This happens in response to the rewards and punishments meted out by the parents, and there is a subsystem of the superego which corresponds to each of these two attitudes of the parents.

Hall and Lindzey sum this up quite clearly:

Whatever [the parents] say is improper and punish him for doing tends to become incorporated into his conscience which is one of two subsystems of the superego. Whatever they approve of and reward him for doing tends to become incorporated into his ego-ideal which is the other subsystem of the superego . . . . The

<sup>21</sup> Journal I, p. 929.

<sup>22</sup> This is not to discount totally the role of heredity. Both Gide and Delay accept that its part is not to be ignored. Cf. Gide's considerations of his origins in Si le grain ne meurt, pp. 21-22, and Delay's statement that: "Le nerveux faible apporte en naissant la peur et la haine de la réalité, à laquelle il ne peut s'adapter . . . ." (J. Delay, La Jeunesse d'André Gide, I, Paris, Gallimard, 1956, pp. 580-581).

conscience punishes the person by making him feel guilty, the ego-ideal rewards the person by making him feel proud of himself. With the formation of the superego, self-control is substituted for parental control.<sup>23</sup>

If one considers Gide's childhood in the light of this definition, a certain deficiency in the creation of his superego becomes evident. In Delay's well-documented account of Gide's formative years, the boy's life is portrayed as being dominated by the puritanical views of his mother, and in Si le grain ne meurt Gide obviously concurs with this view. Even before the death of his father when Gide was ten years old, it appears that it was his mother who had the greater influence on him. This is brought out clearly by Gide's description of a walk which he took in the country near Uzès in the company of his parents and of Anna Shackleton:

Mon père musait et s'amusait de tout. Ma mère, conscience de l'heure, nous talonnait en vain . . . . Je m'amusais d'abord des grandes ombres que nous faisions; puis tout se fondit dans le gris crépusculaire, et je me laissai gagner par l'inquiétude de ma mère. Mon père et Anna, tout à la beauté de l'heure, flânaient, peu soucieux du retard. Je me souviens qu'ils récitaient des vers; ma mère trouvait que "ce n'était pas le moment" et s'écriait:

- "Paul, vous récitez cela quand nous serons rentrés."<sup>24</sup>

We have here a revealing insight into the relationships and temperaments within Gide's family. Firstly, there is the clear indication that Gide tended to identify with his

<sup>23</sup> Hall and Lindzey, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, pp. 39-40.



mother's attitude rather than with his father's. Secondly, and of equal importance, is the contrast between the natural ability of his father to enjoy the present moment to the full and the unimaginative attachment to the dictates of routine shown by his mother.

It appears that Gide's mother brought this same attitude to bear on her son, with the result that her role appeared to his eyes to be negative and repressive. In his family environment there appears to have been little overt love shown for him, for although his father at times showed a maladroit affection for the child, he remained for the most part a distant figure.<sup>25</sup> This is not to say that there was no affection for Gide on the part of his mother. Nevertheless, if one is to believe the testimony of Si le grain ne meurt, the child was much more aware of the controls placed on his conduct than of the parental love which lay behind them. Examples of the repressive surveillance of the child, with the object of preserving him from pernicious influences, range from his mother's refusal to allow him to listen to the music of Chopin, which she considers to be "malsaine,"<sup>26</sup> to her careful selection of Armand Bavretel as a companion for her son in the summers of 1883 and 1884, regarding which Gide's

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Si le grain ne meurt, pp. 15, 18.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 169. It is interesting to note that Delay agrees with her. Cf. Delay, op. cit., I, p. 310.

laconic remark, "Fils de pasteur, nécessairement,"<sup>27</sup> needs no additional comment.

The impression which emerges from the foregoing description of Gide's upbringing is one of negativity. Gide's description of his mother's attitude to the people around her, and especially to her son, lends itself very well to the application of Freud's views on the creation of the superego.

He says:

N'est-ce point Pascal qui disait que nous n'aimons jamais les personnes elles-mêmes, mais seulement les qualités de celles-ci? Je crois que l'on eût pu dire de ma mère que les qualités qu'elle aimait n'étaient point celles que possédaient en fait les personnes sur qui pesait sa tyrannie, mais bien celles qu'elle leur souhaitait de voir acquérir. Du moins je tâche de m'expliquer ainsi ce continuel travail auquel elle se livrait sur autrui; sur moi particulièrement.<sup>28</sup>

Mme Gide's energy seems to have been directed at reinforcing only one element in her son's superego: the conscience. There is not the slightest hint in this passage of her having offered Gide the warmth of her approval which would have contributed to the growth of a strong ego-ideal. Indeed, in the whole of Si le grain ne meurt there are very few instances of Gide's being treated in a positive manner, of his being encouraged in the direction of good rather than discouraged from the path of evil, and any such examples which do occur show that this positive attitude was one which he might expect

<sup>27</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 170.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

from his father or from Anna Shackleton, but never from his mother. It was therefore unfortunate that it should be his mother who set the tenor of his upbringing. Perhaps the clearest indication of how the atmosphere in his family appeared to him is to be found in his Journal of 1897, where he rejects his mother's puritan approach to morality:

Doctrine du péché: étant capable de tout le mal n'en rien faire, et voilà le bien; volonté privatrice; je n'aime point cela. J'aime que la cécité pour le mal vienne de l'éblouissement du bien; sinon vertu est ignorance - pauvreté.<sup>29</sup>

In Freudian terms one might interpret the "volonté privatrice" as the conscience, while the "éblouissement du bien" is the ego-ideal. Gide's upbringing over-emphasised the first and ignored almost completely the second, with the result that the superego which was formed was deficient and unbalanced.

It is our contention that Gide's superego, which is often regarded as having been very strong, only appears so because it has the considerable support of his mother's constant presence. When this support is removed Gide's dependence on his mother becomes obvious. Delay gives a very clear picture of Gide's condition when he is separated from his mother while in Menton, preparing to write the Cahiers d'André Walter. The impression is one of extreme disorganisation and indecision.<sup>30</sup> Particularly revealing is Delay's

<sup>29</sup> Journal I, p. 88.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Delay, op. cit., I, pp. 449-453.

quotation from one of Gide's letters to his mother dated May 30, 1890:

De l'indécision encore, malgré que je sois décidé - c'est-à-dire que je n'ai pas encore pris tout à fait mon parti des décisions de ma raison.<sup>31</sup>

Even more indicative of Gide's dependence on his mother's advice rather than on his own judgement is the appeal in his letter to her of the next day:

Ah! écris-moi - je ne sais pas que faire, Ecris-moi très longuement - quand ce ne serait pour rien décider.<sup>32</sup>

There is a desperate note about this cry for help which suggests that Gide's inhibited reaction to external reality might indeed not result from an overdeveloped superego, but rather from a lack of strong, internalised moral criteria. It thus seems evident that Gide suffers from neurotic rather than moral anxiety.

The weakness of Gide's superego lies in the underdeveloped ego-ideal, for it has no positive moral objectives to propose to the ego in order to counter the instinctual demands of the id. As a result of this weakness, the ego must devote a considerable amount of its share of psychic energy to the task of supporting the superego against the id, because, as we have seen, if the id becomes too strong it produces anxiety in the ego. The ego then defends itself

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 453.

<sup>32</sup> Unpublished letter to his mother, May 31, 1890. Quoted in Delay, op. cit. I, p. 450.

against this anxiety by repressing the instinctual demands. However, it is not always successful in maintaining the repressive barriers, for it needs energy for its other functions too, and if energy is diverted to the ego's role as contact with external reality, for instance, the id may break through the defences. It is for this reason, we would suggest, that Gide's reaction to external reality is characteristically slow and inhibited. When the id does succeed in overcoming the repressive barriers, the ego feels threatened, and diverts energy away from its function as contact with external reality in order to counter the danger from within. Thus we have a cyclical pattern of behaviour which is discernible throughout Gide's childhood and adolescence. Normally he is extremely inhibited in his relationship with external reality. However, at times the ego fails to maintain the repressions on the id and Gide acts in an impulsive and irrational manner. This is followed by a strong repressive reaction from the ego, and a resultant return to his normal inhibited behaviour.

Examples of this pattern of alternating extremes of behaviour abound in Gide's accounts of his youth. Delay notes that "Gide a souffert toute sa vie de son absence de spontanéité."<sup>33</sup> This would certainly seem to be true of Gide the child who, when playing with a kaleidoscope, does not

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<sup>33</sup> Delay, *op. cit.*, I, p. 590.

manipulate it rapidly, as do the other children, in an attempt to see as many changes as possible, but prefers to move it slowly in order to observe the change in the greatest detail, and sees pleasure in terms of understanding rather than of direct sensual experience: "... les changements ne causeraient plus de surprise; mais comme on suivait bien les parties! comme on comprenait bien le pourquoi du plaisir!"<sup>34</sup> This is exactly the same attitude as the one which Gide notes in "Ainsi soit-il" where, as we have seen, he regretfully acknowledges that he consigns everything and everyone that he meets into the past, only retaining "la signification."<sup>35</sup>

It is in his approach to his fellow human beings that his inhibited nature is most obvious. An example of this is to be found in his description, in Notes d'un voyage en Bretagne, of the halt and the lame seen on a pilgrimage to Sainte-Anne d'Auray in the summer of 1889:

Et tous, au grand air, étalent leurs misères; mais par le soleil, la tristesse des haillons se dissipe; on ne voit plus que le pittoresque de la forme, que l'éclat des couleurs.<sup>36</sup>

In spite of the many forms of human misery presented to his eyes, there is little evidence of pity in his description, but rather an appreciation of the aesthetic quality of the scene. One finds here the same lack of emotional response to

<sup>34</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> See above, p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> O.C. I, p. 17.

life, the same consigning of people and things to the past which he notes in "Ainsi soit-il" and which is evident in the coach incident. Confirmation of this comes when he analyses his reaction to the sight of the diverse afflictions of the beggars:

. . . c'est le rêve étrange du petit Elfe des contes: un voyage très bizarre dans un tableau ancien, où l'on regarde sans même s'étonner, car on sait bien que c'est un rêve, des fantoches s'agiter pour vous distraire, dans des paysages inconnus.<sup>37</sup>

The whole scene lacks reality because, just as the coach incident failed to produce fear in Gide, so the misery of the beggars elicits no affective reaction in him.

The encounter with the pilgrims involves Gide's attitude to a group of strangers, but he gives evidence to show that his relationships with close friends were essentially little warmer. It is true that on the surface he seemed to need intensity in each of his friendships:

Je ne supportais point de penser qu'il pût avoir confident plus intime, et je m'offrais à tous aussi complètement que j'exigeais que chacun se donnât à moi.<sup>38</sup>

However, the effect of spontaneity suggested in the second half of the sentence is negated by the import of the first half. Gide's offering and requiring total commitment in the relationship is the result of an idea, not of genuine affection. He must have constant proof of the strength of the

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>38</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 259.



friendship because he cannot bear the thought that he is not the closest friend. Gide confirms a few lines later that he is aware of this tendency to be more concerned with the abstract concept than with the real person: ". . . je ne sais plus aujourd'hui . . . si, plus encore que l'ami, ce n'était pas l'amitié que j'aimais. Ma profession était quasi mystique . . . ."39

This last remark suggests that it is indeed possible to extend the application of Gide's attitude to the closest of all relationships which he had with other people, his love for Madeleine, which provided the "mystique orient de ma vie."<sup>40</sup> He describes how he came to accept that caring for Madeleine was to be his mystical guiding principle in the following terms:

. . . je sentais que, dans ce petit être que déjà je chérissais, habitait une grande, une intolérable détresse, un chagrin tel que je n'aurais pas trop de tout mon amour, toute ma vie, pour l'en guérir.<sup>41</sup>

This is a response to the emotion embodied by his cousin rather than to Madeleine herself, and as such it differs only in intensity from the attitude governing all his human relations, which he defines in his Journal entry of January, 1890:

. . . je cherche ce qu'est l'affection et je doute si j'aime personne . . . . Et pourtant mon coeur tressaille

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 128-129.

de pitié, oh! d'une pitié infinie, à toutes les tristesses que je rencontre.<sup>42</sup>

The inhibited nature of his approach to other human beings is representative of the unsatisfactory relationship which he had in general with external reality, and which left him with the need to "épaissir la vie." However, there were times, we have noted, when the ego failed to restrain the id, with a resultant outburst of irrational and impulsive behaviour. Examples of this attitude can also be found in his relations with other people. One thinks, for instance, of the account in Si le grain ne meurt of his introduction, at the age of four or five years, to his cousin:

La cousine de Flaux m'attira contre elle. Mais, devant l'éclat de son épaule nue, je ne sais quel vertige me prit: au lieu de poser mes lèvres sur la joue qu'elle me tendit, fasciné par l'épaule éblouissante j'y allai d'un grand coup de dents. La cousine fit un cri de douleur; j'en fis un d'horreur.<sup>43</sup>

We have here both the impulsive access of antisocial aggression and the immediate horror on realising what he had done. Accounts of the same sequence of impulsive action followed by regret abound in Si le grain ne meurt and in his Journal, where his entry of June 22, 1907, is probably the best definition of the two sides of his personality: "Je ne suis qu'un petit garçon qui s'amuse - doublé d'un pasteur qui l'ennuie."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Journal I, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup>Journal I, p. 250.

There is a second type of experience which reveals much the same pattern of behaviour. This is the "Schaudern," of which Gide gives three examples in Si le grain ne meurt and which he describes as "le bouleversement de tout mon être . . . au contact de l'invisible réalité,"<sup>45</sup> thus linking it to his experience of the "seconde réalité." However, there is nothing enjoyable about these first three examples of the "Schaudern," which Delay describes as "des ivresses émotives, peurs . . . plus ou moins sans objet apparent . . ."<sup>46</sup> Gide's own description of the second "Schaudern" is significant:

On eût dit que brusquement s'ouvrait l'écluse particulière de je ne sais quelle commune mer intérieure inconnue dont le flot s'engouffrait démesurément dans mon coeur; j'étais moins triste qu'épouvanté . . .<sup>47</sup>

It is not difficult to see in this description the failure of the ego to maintain the repressions on the id with the consequent sudden and unmotivated invasion of the consciousness by the contents of the unconscious which had been too long bottled up. It is significant, too, that Gide feels the effect in his heart. What has been repressed too long is the whole range of emotional reactions to the world around him, and it is the force of their outburst which creates in the consciousness the panic of the drowning man.

<sup>45</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 134.

<sup>46</sup> Delay, op. cit., I, p. 174.

<sup>47</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 135.

However, Gide points out that with time the "Schaudern" lose their frightening quality:

Depuis, les accès de cette étrange aura, loin de devenir moins fréquents, s'acclimatèrent, mais tempérés, maîtrisés, apprivoisés pour ainsi dire, de sorte que j'appris à n'en être effrayé . . . .<sup>48</sup>

In their later, less terrifying form, Gide calls these experiences "ivresse sans vin." It is still the same intrusion into the consciousness by the elements normally repressed in the id, but the greater frequency which he notes is accompanied by a corresponding reduction in anxiety.

The oscillation between extremes of behaviour has one obvious result for Gide: with the conscious self in constant danger of being overwhelmed by the unconscious and aware of the existence of another self which has a fuller, more satisfying appreciation of life, Gide has difficulty in knowing who he is. The two sides to his personality seem to him to be too far apart to be reconcilable: "De moi à moi, quelle distance!"<sup>49</sup> His tendency, therefore, is to choose between them, rather than to attempt to bring them together. It is for this reason that his writings reveal such a preoccupation with the problem of sincerity, with the question as to which one of these selves is his authentic one. His Journal entries of 1890 and 1891 reveal that he tends towards accepting the impulsive, "Romantic" side of his nature as the true one.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>49</sup> Journal I, p. 365.

Thus in an entry in January, 1890, he states:

Je pense maintenant que ce qui m'empêche d'avoir  
l'impression vive, c'est de ne pas me sentir seul.  
Je m'occupe trop de ceux qui m'entourent.<sup>50</sup>

It is the socially acceptable self which is insincere, in this view, and he feels that it is inauthentic because it lacks the directness of the spontaneous reaction:

Mon esprit me dictait trop les impressions à avoir:  
elles ne me saisissaient pas.<sup>51</sup>

The conscious self, dominated by neurotic anxiety, gives him the impression of living in indirect contact with reality, for his concern is more with acting in a manner acceptable to others than with satisfying the needs of the whole of his personality. Gide brings this out very clearly in his Journal entry of March 28, 1893, where he points out the limiting effect of seeing himself through others' eyes:

J'ai passé tout un temps de jeunesse à tâcher de  
prouver aux autres des émotions que j'aurais peut-être  
eues, si cet effort pour les prouver ne les eût pas  
toutes tuées.<sup>52</sup>

External reality is therefore a distorting influence on what Gide considers to be his true nature, and it is in this sense that one can understand his statement: "Le monde m'est un miroir, et je suis étonné quand il me reflète mal."<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

image which he sees of himself through the eyes of other people, and especially of his mother, is not, he feels, the reflection of his true self.

However, it requires courage to break free from dependence on the mirror of the world,<sup>54</sup> for external reality not only reflects Gide's nature; it also determines it to a considerable extent. Gide admits that he is very easily influenced by others: ". . . j'ai toujours un trop vif désir de leur plaire."<sup>55</sup> This, we would suggest, is because his weakened superego needs the support of external controls:

Je ne suis pas de ces tempéraments qui d'abord s'insurgent; au contraire il m'a toujours plu d'obéir, de me plier aux règles.<sup>56</sup>

It is not difficult to lay the blame for Gide's weakness on his mother. Not only did she contribute to the imbalance in his superego, as we have seen, but also she seems to have played the role of his external conscience so thoroughly that she became a moral crutch to him, albeit one which he resented. Her stifling solicitude for his moral welfare is suggested by Gide's comments on the death of his two parents. When his father died and left him in the sole care of his mother, his reaction was: "Et je me sentis soudain tout

<sup>54</sup>Cf. Journal I, p. 20: "Oser être soi. Il faut le souligner aussi dans ma tête."

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>56</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 199.

enveloppé de cet amour, qui désormais se refermait sur moi."<sup>57</sup> This enveloping love remained a constant factor in Gide's life until his mother's death in 1895, an event to which he reacted in a typically ambivalent manner:

Marie et moi nous l'assistâmes dans ses derniers instants, et lorsqu'enfin son coeur cessa de battre, je sentis s'abîmer tout mon être dans un gouffre d'amour, de détresse et de liberté.<sup>58</sup>

The liberty which became his definitively with the death of his mother had been increasing throughout Gide's adolescence as he gradually acquired a certain amount of independence.<sup>59</sup> However, increasing autonomy was gained, one surmises, at the expense of the external support which his superego had come to expect from his mother. Gide was obliged to depend more on his own moral resources, and this at a time when his awakened sexuality was putting great pressure on the ego to allow it expression. Gide describes the uneven combat in Si le grain ne meurt:

Mon éducation puritaine avait fait un monstre des revendications de la chair; comment eussé-je compris, en ce temps, que ma nature se dérobaît à la solution la plus généralement admise, autant que mon puritanisme la réprouvait. Cependant l'état de chasteté, force était de m'en persuader, restait insidieux et précaire; tout autre échappement m'étant refusé, je retombais dans

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>59</sup> The story of his tour of Brittany in 1889 shows that this independence was not easily gained. Cf. Ireland, op. cit., p. 21, note 3.



le vice de ma première enfance et me désespérais à neuf chaque fois que j'y retombais.<sup>60</sup>

From this description it is plain to see that Gide's sexual inhibitions and their consequences follow the same pattern as all the other inhibitions which he experienced. The id can only be restrained for a certain length of time before the demand for expression of the sexual instincts becomes great enough to break the repressive barriers. When this happens, and Gide returns to the onanism of his childhood, feelings of guilt created by the conscience make their appearance and the repressions are re-established until once more the pressure in the unconscious proves too great for them.

The sexual problem for Gide differs from his other problems in relation to reality only in its severity. It creates the same conflict between the different systems of his personality, but does so in a more intense manner and at more frequent intervals. This, combined with the decrease in outside support for his weak superego, produces conditions which favour a loosening of the ego's grasp on reality. Freud notes that "The severest demand on the ego is probably the keeping down of the instinctual claims of the id, to accomplish which it is obliged to maintain large expenditures of energy on anticathexes."<sup>61</sup> The drain on the ego's share

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<sup>60</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 247.

<sup>61</sup> S. Freud, op. cit., p. 29.

of psychic energy is all the greater because it has to support the superego which normally would play its part in restraining the id but which is too weak to be effective. Since the amount of energy in the psyche is limited, and since so much is devoted to mediating in the conflict between the id and the superego, there is correspondingly less available to the ego in its role as intermediary between the organism and external reality. Freud points out that the end result of an excessive internal demand for energy may be total alienation from reality:

If the other two become too strong, they succeed in loosening and altering the ego's organization, so that its proper relation to reality is disturbed or even brought to an end. We have seen it happen in dreaming: when the ego is detached from the reality of the external world, it slips down, under the influence of the internal world, into psychosis.<sup>62</sup>

This, we suggest, is the true reason for Gide's feeling the increasing threat of madness in 1890. The more psychic energy that the ego needs to maintain the repressive barriers against the id, the less it has for its other function of remaining in touch with reality. As the decrease in external support for the superego coincides with the increase in the power of the id due to the reawakened sexuality, the need for the ego to intervene as executive of the personality by restraining the id gradually becomes greater in the course of Gide's adolescence. The result is that there is a gradual

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 29-30.

decrease in the amount of energy available for the ego's capacity to interact properly with reality. Thus, we find that the 18-year-old in the coach incident has no awareness of danger, although Freud points out that the perception and avoidance of danger is the chief role of the ego:

Just as the id is directed exclusively to obtaining pleasure, so the ego is governed by considerations of safety. The ego has set itself the task of self-preservation . . . .<sup>63</sup>

There is a further symptom of the weakening of the ego in its relationship to external reality which cannot be ignored in Gide's case. This is the effect of the reduction in psychic energy on the ego's ability to distinguish between perception of external reality and the entry into consciousness of internal events such as passages of ideas and thought-processes. Freud defines this capacity of the ego in the following terms:

Since memory-traces can become conscious just as perceptions do . . . the possibility arises of a confusion which would lead to a mistaking of reality. The ego guards itself against this possibility by the institution of reality-testing . . . .<sup>64</sup>

Should this reality-testing capacity be reduced by the general weakening of the ego in relation to the external world, then it is to be expected that the individual will experience various degrees of difficulty in distinguishing between true

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

external reality and the emanations of his psyche. Freud makes this point well:

The equation "perception=reality (external world)" no longer holds. Errors, which can now easily arise and do so regularly in dreams, are called hallucinations.<sup>65</sup>

Gide's experiences of the "seconde réalité," his lack of the "sens de la réalité," his inability to believe completely in external reality, are all related to the weakening of the reality-testing function of the ego. It is possible, for example, to interpret the "seconde réalité" as a projection on to external reality of the qualities which are lacking in his perception of life when he is fully awake. In his Notes d'un voyage en Bretagne, Gide reports an experience which seems to suggest this:

. . . il me semblait que le paysage n'était plus qu'une émanation de moi-même projetée, qu'une partie de moi toute vibrante - ou plutôt comme je ne me sentais qu'en lui, je m'en croyais le centre; il dormait avant ma venue, inerte et virtuel, et je le créais pas à pas en percevant ses harmonies; j'en étais la conscience même. Et je m'avançais émerveillé, dans ce jardin de mon rêve.<sup>66</sup>

One notes immediately that his emanations are vibrant, as opposed to his normal inhibited approach to reality. At the same time there is the suggestion that external reality is an amorphous mass to which he gives form and life by the way in which he perceives it. The danger is obvious for someone who continually feels the need to "épaissir la vie," Why not,

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>66</sup> O.C. I, p. 9.

indeed, make life conform to his dreams? The temptation to do so is the beginning of a path which can lead to the creation of a permanent substitute reality, to that total alienation from reality which is madness.

Gide's fear of insanity might well have originated in his realising how tempting such a course of action was. That he did not succumb to the temptation was the result of two factors. Firstly, he retained enough of a grasp on reality, enough common sense, to recognise the danger. Secondly, he found that reality at times resisted his attempts to impose his view upon it. In the same Notes d'un voyage en Bretagne, shortly after the account of the receptivity of nature, Gide encounters a "paysage" which is totally impervious to the emanations of his soul:

Lugubre étang . . . . Il demeurerait tel, indifférent sous mes regards, comme avant moi, comme si je n'étais pas là; et je me sentais inutile. La ligne de ces berges n'envelopperait aucun émoi possible de mon âme. Ce n'était pas fait pour moi; j'en étais méchamment exclus; ça n'avait pas besoin de moi pour centre et ça continuerait sans moi.<sup>67</sup>

The temptation to create the world in the image of his dreams was not limited to inanimate nature. One finds examples of this in his relationship to his fellow men. For example, while his normal approach to others was an obsessive search for approval,<sup>68</sup> one finds him imputing to his friends

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Journal I, p. 37: "Ma question perpétuelle (et c'est une obsession malade): 'Suis-je aimable?'"

a preference for him that was by no means certain:

... je ne dirais là rien que de banal - car chaque esprit se fait centre, et c'est autour de soi qu'on croit que le monde s'ordonne - si, de chacun de ces amis, je ne me fusse flatté de devenir l'ami le meilleur.<sup>69</sup>

One should note, however, that, as in the case with nature, his friends refused to conform to his view of them, his stormy relationship with Pierre Louÿs being a perfect example of this.<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps the most obvious instance of Gide's expecting others to behave according to his conception of them is to be found in his relationship with Madeleine. Schlumberger makes the following remark regarding Et nunc manet in te, the work which Gide wrote near the end of his life with the intention of giving an account of his life with Madeleine:

Il avait pris pour titre ce fragment d'un vers de Virgile: Et nunc manet in te ("Désormais, c'est en toi qu'elle demeure"), et ces termes, par lesquels il pensait définir une position métaphysique, trahissaient sans qu'il le voulût un point de vue étroitement égoïcentrique. Pas un mot ou un geste de la disparue si ce n'est en fonction de lui-même.<sup>71</sup>

These words could be applied equally well to Gide in 1890.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 259.

<sup>70</sup> From the beginning Louÿs seemed to wish to restrain the excesses of this friendship to which he appeared to react in the same way that Gide reacted to his mother's love. Cf. Si le grain ne meurt, pp. 220-221.

<sup>71</sup> J. Schlumberger, Madeleine et André Gide, Paris, Gallimard, 1956, p. 15.

<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the parallel between the title of the work and André Walter's attitude to Emmanuèle can hardly be missed.

Gide's love for Madeleine, according to Delay, was for an ideal figure which had little in common with the real one:

Son amour était marqué . . . de la méprise qui consiste à ne pas aimer l'autre dans son altérité, mais à travers une "figure idéale" sans commune mesure avec la réalité . . . . La "figure idéale" qu'il avait créée l'imagination d'André Gide, il la projetait sur sa cousine, attribuant à celle-ci une psychologie qui n'était pas la sienne, un "drame" qui n'était pas le sien, tout en restant aveugle devant celui de la réalité."<sup>73</sup>

Again, however, one finds that reality, in the form of Madeleine, resists his attempts to make it conform to his dream. For confirmation of this one need only look at Madeleine's reaction to the Cahiers d'André Walter, the work which was supposed to remove her last objection to marrying Gide:

Je n'avais pu savoir ce qu'Emmanuèle pensait de mon livre, tout ce qu'elle m'avait laissé connaître, c'est qu'elle repoussait la demande qui s'ensuivit.<sup>74</sup>

We have traced the development of Gide's attitude to reality in its general lines from his childhood up to 1890, when he began to write the Cahiers d'André Walter. We have noted that his grasp of external reality was weakened by his inability to have what he felt to be a satisfactory affective relationship with the world around him. This type of contact was provided by his experiences of the "seconde réalité" and of the "ivresse sans vin" which were, however, of short

<sup>73</sup>Delay, op. cit., I, p. 500.

<sup>74</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 257.



of his childhood:

... je retombais dans le vice de ma première enfance et me désespérais à neuf chaque fois que j'y retombais. Avec beaucoup d'amour, de musique, de métaphysique et de poésie, c'était le sujet de mon livre.<sup>76</sup>

Thus one of the main themes in the Cahiers d'André Walter coincides with one of the reasons for Gide's weakening hold on reality: it is the increasing power of the id, the source of the instinctual drives.

The second reason for the loosening of Gide's contact with the world around him was, we have noted, the decrease in the support which his superego received from his mother, and it is our contention that this, too, can be found among the central themes of the Cahiers d'André Walter. In fact, it forms the most important theme of all, the one which Gide termed "l'axe du livre . . . autour de quoi je faisais tout le reste graviter."<sup>77</sup> He is, of course, referring to his love for Madeleine. Gide states that one of the purposes of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter was to persuade Madeleine to marry him:

Mon livre ne m'apparaissait plus, par moments, que comme une longue déclaration, une confession d'amour; je la rêvais si noble, si pathétique, si péremptoire, qu'à la suite de sa publication nos parents ne pussent plus s'opposer à notre mariage, ni Emmanuèle me refuser sa main.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

duration and served mainly to show him what was lacking in his normal relations. We also pointed out that in his teens two processes coincided. At the same time as Gide was gaining a little independence from his mother, and thus losing some of her moral support, his reawakened sexuality was putting increasing strain on the repressions imposed by his puritan upbringing. These two processes combined to weaken his hold on reality and to increase his tendency to project his own view on the external world. By the time he was about to write the Cahiers d'André Walter, he felt that the temptation to create reality in the image of his dreams was growing so strong that madness appeared as a distinct possibility. It is now our intention to see how this situation is reflected and projected in Gide's first work.

When Gide first talks of the Cahiers d'André Walter in Si le grain ne meurt it is as a vehicle for all the problems which are assailing him and as a declaration of his love:

C'était André Walter que déjà je commençais d'écrire et que j'alimentais de toutes mes interrogations, de tous mes débats intérieurs, de tous mes troubles, de toutes mes perplexités. . . .<sup>75</sup>

Elsewhere in Si le grain ne meurt Gide states that the principle problem which he faces in life and which he incorporates in his work is his increasingly desperate struggle to deny expression to his repressed sexual desires, a struggle which is marked by continual failure as he reverts to the onanism.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

The peremptory aspect of the work, it appears, lies in the warning which it contains for Madeleine. Gide uses the Cahiers to tell Madeleine that his sanity is at risk if she continues to refuse to marry him. Beneath this romantic passion it is possible to find some cold psychological explanation. If we ask why marrying Madeleine should save Gide from insanity, we can find two possible answers based on what we know of his situation in 1890. The first possibility is that marriage, by legitimising sexual relations, would allow the demands of the id to be satisfied. The internal conflict would therefore be resolved and Gide's ego would be able to function efficiently in its relationship to external reality. In view of the totally platonic nature of Gide's eventual marriage to Madeleine this seems very unlikely, and Delay rules out the possibility completely:

Jouaient ici à plein toutes les prohibitions possibles. Madeleine était doublement sacrée, c'est-à-dire improfanable, comme image de mère et comme image de la soeur aînée, images de la Vertu.<sup>79</sup>

The second possible answer to our question lies in the fact which Delay has just pointed out: that Gide identified Madeleine with his mother. Gide himself confirms this in "Ainsi soit-il":

. . . aussi, mais dans le rêve seulement, la figure de ma femme se substitue parfois, subtilement et comme mystiquement, à celle de ma mère, sans que j'en sois très étonné. Les contours des visages ne sont pas

<sup>79</sup> Delay, op. cit. I, pp. 516-517.

assez nets pour me retenir de passer de l'une à l'autre; l'émotion reste vive, mais ce qui la cause reste flottant; bien plus: le rôle que l'une ou l'autre joue dans l'action du rêve reste à peu près le même, c'est-à-dire un rôle d'inhibition, ce qui explique ou motive la substitution.<sup>80</sup>

There are two inferences to be drawn from this statement.

Firstly, the fact that the figures of Madeleine and his mother are confused only in his dreams suggests that the identification is a subconscious one which operates permanently although it only reaches consciousness in his memory of his dreams.

Secondly, the reason for the identification is quite clearly stated. Madeleine resembles his mother by the inhibiting role which she plays. It would seem, then, that in his wish to marry Madeleine Gide is subconsciously seeking to replace his mother's weakening support for his superego with a more acceptable, and therefore stronger one. Delay suggests that Gide's female characters tend to be projections of his superego values:

Emmanuèle, comme plus tard Alissa, c'est en définitive André Gide non pas tel qu'il était, mais tel qu'il avait d'abord voulu être pour se conformer à son surmoi moral, issu d'une éducation puritaine . . . .<sup>81</sup>

Gide confirms this, and, in Et nunc manet in te, also points out that he did exactly the same with Madeleine:

... à quel point, durant le plus fort de mon amour, j'ai pu me méprendre sur elle! Car tout l'effort de

<sup>80</sup> Journal II, p. 1213.

<sup>81</sup> Delay, op. cit. I, p. 518.

mon amour n'était point tant de me rapprocher d'elle, que de la rapprocher de cette figure idéale que j'inventais.<sup>82</sup>

Having created this ideal figure out of Madeleine, and having projected all his superego values on to her, Gide can then use her as a moral support: ". . . ce n'est que le meilleur de moi qui communiait avec elle . . . ." <sup>83</sup> Thus, Gide's superego regains the external reinforcement which it has been losing. As a result his ego needs to devote less psychic energy to restraining the id and can thus interact more effectively with external reality.

Delay suggests that Madeleine was well aware of the motive behind Gide's wish to marry her:

Elle devinait bien que c'était elle, l'aînée, qui devrait auprès de lui jouer un rôle tutélaire et remplacer une mère dont il ne supportait plus qu'impatiemment la tutelle. Ce rôle difficile, elle devait accepter de l'assumer cinq ans plus tard, précisément aussitôt après la mort de la mère d'André Gide, qui le laissa désespéré . . . .<sup>84</sup>

If the work of art, in Gide's view, is "une démonstration," we would suggest that the Idea which is to be "demonstrated"<sup>85</sup> is precisely this: if Madeleine does not agree to replace his mother as a form of external conscience he will lose his contact with reality to the extent of total alienation. It is

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<sup>82</sup> Journal II, p. 1124.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 1126.

<sup>84</sup> Delay, op. cit. I, p. 502.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. O.C. I, p. 94.

our contention that the whole structure and composition of the Cahiers d'André Walter is designed to lead to this conclusion.

The work is divided into two sections: the "Cahier blanc" and the "Cahier noir." In the first, André Walter is looking back over the story of his love for Emmanuèle, and in the second we witness the inward struggle which eventually drives him to insanity. There are many ways in which the difference between the "Cahier blanc" and the "Cahier noir" can be expressed, but we will attempt to do so in terms of Gide's relationship to his double, André Walter.

The "Cahier blanc" appears to be mainly autobiographical in nature, with André Walter resembling Gide more or less as he is in 1890. Walter's situation differs from Gide's only in two points, but both are crucial. Firstly, his mother has just died. Secondly, in response to the request of his dying mother he has agreed to give up all hope of marrying Emmanuèle, who shortly thereafter marries another suitor. This situation is not as far removed from Gide's as appears at first sight, for in it we find reflected both the weakening moral support from Gide's mother and the rejection by both his mother and Madeleine of the idea of the cousins' ever marrying. What does distinguish the two is the fact that Walter's predicament is definitive, while Gide's can still be resolved.

Walter's reaction to his double loss is to withdraw from active life in order to write a book, which, he hopes,

will help him to come to terms with his life. In this he is doing exactly what Gide is attempting to do in writing the Cahiers d'André Walter. To begin with, Walter recounts in retrospect his love for Emmanuèle, and it is in this account of the past that we find the greatest resemblance between Gide and his hero. This is indicated by the presence, in the "Cahier blanc" of a large number of "feuilles retrouvées" which Ireland notes as being "for the most part simply transcriptions from Gide's own 'cahiers de lecture' and private diaries."<sup>86</sup> These "feuilles retrouvées" are purportedly pages of a diary on which Walter has noted his impressions and attitudes over the preceding two years, and they come to a halt shortly before the end of the "Cahier blanc" and the death of Walter's mother: "Ici s'arrêtent les pages écrites. Puis c'est ma mère malade."<sup>87</sup> The "Cahier blanc" thus presents the first part of Gide's demonstration, showing, through André Walter, Gide's state of mind in 1890, and then setting the action in motion by removing the moral support provided by Walter's mother.

We are told at the outset that Walter's mother has died and that he has obeyed her last request in spite of the bitter pain which relinquishing Emmanuèle has cost him:

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<sup>86</sup>Ireland, op. cit., p. 25. Martin-Chauffier, editor of the Oeuvres complètes, confirms this, and notes that everything of value in Gide's Journal prior to those parts published in O.C. I, found its way into the Cahiers d'André Walter, and particularly into the "Cahier blanc." Cf. O.C. I, xxii-xxiii.

<sup>87</sup>O.C. I, p. 87.



Que tu reposes en paix, ma mère. Tu as été obéie.  
Certes, l'amertume de cette double épreuve étonne  
encore mon âme . . . .<sup>88</sup>

We have here some of the principal elements which Gide wishes to suggest to Madeleine as ingredients of his own potential tragedy. The death of Walter's mother and his acceding to her last wish have conspired to remove at a stroke both her beneficial influence on him and the only possible means of replacing that influence: marriage to Emmanuèle. We would suggest that a further ingredient is present, although probably not consciously recognised by Gide: Walter's acceptance of his mother's judgement in ethical questions<sup>89</sup> reflects, possibly in an exaggerated form, Gide's own.<sup>90</sup>

The final ingredient in the witch's brew which Gide creates for André Walter is the increasing difficulty which he has in restraining the demand for expression of his instinctual and sexual self. Gide puts his hero into the situation which he himself was facing in 1890, and allows Walter to define the problem which they now share. This is what Gide calls "cette inhabilité foncière à mêler l'esprit et les sens . . .",<sup>91</sup> and what Walter describes as the

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>89</sup>Walter's mother makes her last wish an ethical question by asking her son to choose between his happiness and Emmanuèle's. Cf. O.C. I, p. 29.

<sup>90</sup>Cf. Si le grain ne meurt, p. 199: ". . . il m'a toujours plu d'obéir, de me plier aux règles, de céder . . ."

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

conflict between body and soul:

. . . je les ai tant séparés que maintenant je n'en suis plus le maître; ils vont chacun de leur côté, le corps et l'âme; elle, rêve de caresses toujours plus chastes; lui, s'abandonne à la dérive.<sup>92</sup>

This is precisely the type of internal conflict which in Gide led to a loosening of his hold on reality, and in André Walter we find similar symptoms. Walter shows the same need for a more vivid contact with life which Gide felt was the "raison d'être" of his "seconde réalité." Walter expresses it thus:

La vie intense, voilà le superbe: je ne changerais pas la mienne contre aucune; j'y ai vécu plusieurs vies, et la réelle a été la moindre.<sup>93</sup>

The reason for Walter's dissatisfaction with real life also coincides with what we have noted in Gide:

Multiplier les émotions . . . . La vie du dehors n'est pas assez violente; de plus âpres frémissements sont dans les enthousiasmes intimes.<sup>94</sup>

It is the warmth of an affective relationship with the world around him that Walter misses, and in order to compensate for his inhibited outlook he must look to his inner life, to provide a sense of being alive: "Que jamais l'âme ne retombe inactive; il la faut repaître d'enthousiasmes."<sup>95</sup> This rejection of external reality in favour of an inner world carries

<sup>92</sup> O.C. I, p. 50.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 42-43.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

with it the possibility of hallucination:

Les chimères plutôt que les réalités; les imaginations des poètes font mieux saillir la vérité idéale, cachée derrière l'apparence des choses.<sup>96</sup>

These chimera are welcome for they are recognised as a product of the poetic imagination and serve a purpose in the search for ideal truth. However, Walter, in his yearning for a fuller life and obviously influenced by having read Schopenhauer, is tempted to impose his own vision on reality:

Tous ont raison. Les choses DEVIENNENT vraies; il suffit qu'on les pense. - C'est en nous qu'est la réalité; notre esprit crée ses Vérités. Et la meilleure ne sera pas celle que la raison surtout approuve: les sentiments mènent l'homme et non pas les idées.<sup>97</sup>

This is the solipsist myth which we discussed in the previous chapter and which, according to Lehmann, was based on a misinterpretation of Schopenhauer's "Die Welt ist meine Vorstellung."<sup>98</sup> Walter would like to believe that he can create reality in a form which would give full rein to his emotions, but in order to do so, he must ignore the voice of his reason:

Et la raison se moquera; mais, malgré que la philosophie proteste, le coeur aura toujours besoin de croire.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. The phrase concerning sentiments and ideas is attributed in a footnote to Ribot, whose work, Schopenhauer (1874) helped to make the German philosopher popular in France.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Lehmann, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

<sup>99</sup> O.C. I, p. 55.

The recognition of the existence of his reason as well as of his heart is the sign that Walter still has a hold on reality in the "Cahier blanc." At this point he is still able to look at himself with a certain amount of lucid objectivity and even with irony. Thus, in a "feuille retrouvée" we find him rudely shattering any illusions regarding the origin of his poetic inspiration:

O l'inconscience du poète! - aveuglement! croire à la muse inspiratrice quand c'est la puberté qui l'inquiète; puis se promener par les nuits claires avec l'illusion qu'on chante à l'idéal . . . Les chiens aussi aboient après les clairs de lune!<sup>100</sup>

Such irony is a sign of a healthy self-critical attitude, and even when Walter opts to retain his poetic vision of reality he is still quite conscious of the fact that it is an illusion:

- Alors, romantique parce que mon sang bouillonne . . . .  
Tant pis! l'illusion de l'idéal est bonne et je la veux garder.<sup>101</sup>

André Walter thus reaches the end of the "Cahier blanc" in much the same condition as Gide was in when he settled down to write the Cahiers d'André Walter. He has managed to retain his hold on reality in spite of the pressure put on his ego by his sexual drive, in spite of the fact that he has lost the moral support of his mother and has been unable to replace it with Emmanuèle's, and in spite of the temptation of

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

the richer life offered by his imagination. It appears at this point that Walter is going to use this imagination in artistic creation. Like Gide, he has shut himself off from the world and announces his intention of writing a book:

... je me suis enfermé dans cette solitude, car je ne connais plus personne ... selon la chair, comme dit l'apôtre.

Et je vais écrire mon livre.<sup>102</sup>

One notes immediately, however, that there is no causal relationship between the two statements. He is isolating himself from mankind, not in order to write his book, but because of all that has gone before. We therefore have two separate themes: the first deals with Walter's relationship with the world around him and will develop the ambiguity of the term "la chair," while the second concerns the creation of the work of art. It is because of the existence of the two themes that the reaction of Walter's soul is ambiguous:

J'ai dit à mon âme:

Qu'as-tu donc à sourire? Ta solitude est désespérée. . . .

Pleure plutôt; ils sont partis, tous les aimés, et t'ont laissée seule; pleure; tes amours sont passées.

Il est fini le temps d'aimer . . . .

"Crois-tu?" m'a répondu mon âme, et souriait toujours . . . .<sup>103</sup>

Is it because his soul welcomes the prospect of expressing itself in the work of art that it is smiling? Or is it because the elimination of the real human beings will allow

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

it to create substitute ones which are more amenable to its control? The one alternative will result in a work of art while the other will lead to total alienation from reality.

At the end of the "Cahier blanc" André Walter announces: "Toutes choses sont faites nouvelles . . . ." <sup>104</sup> The conclusion of the first "Cahier" thus appears to be a "point de départ" rather than a "point d'arrivée." In Gide's demonstration for Madeleine's sake he has provided the basic information which is that Emmanuèle and André Walter resemble Madeleine and André Gide. In addition, he has proposed the hypothesis that he has lost the support of both his mother and Madeleine. In the course of the "Cahier noir" he will follow the developments which arise from this hypothetical loss as its effects assail André Walter in his fictional reality.

While the "Cahier noir" begins with Walter's reflections on the book which he will write, it is not long before we find the theme of his attitude to reality making its appearance. Walter reminds us of his loss of moral guidance:

Une des pires angoisses est de ne pas savoir, personne qui me guide, qui me conseille et me console. <sup>105</sup>

At the same time the problem of his sexuality has not ceased to plague him. With the marriage and eventual death of

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

Emmanuèle one means of expressing his sexual drive has been removed, but another takes its place. This is onanism, which cannot be escaped by the mere avoidance of a partner, and is therefore a much more implacable foe:

L'ennemi est en nous: voilà le terrible. La fuite n'est pas possible. On s'inquiète, on erre, on se désespère. - On s'enferme dans sa chambre; l'ennemi s'y enferme avec vous. - Alors . . . un abandon très lâche, le désir d'en finir.<sup>106</sup>

Not only has the sexual urge found a form which he cannot escape, but also the struggle between it and the repressive barriers is becoming more violent, with the result that the dichotomy in his nature is becoming steadily greater:

L'évolution est toujours la même. L'esprit s'exalte; il oublie de veiller: la chair tombe . . . Pourtant ce n'est pas un cycle, mais une spirale qui s'élargit toujours et dont les anneaux s'écartent toujours plus du centre et se distendent; les sauts sont plus brusques; les élans, plus forcés.<sup>107</sup>

We thus have the two elements which, with Walter as with Gide, can reduce the efficiency of the ego as a contact with external reality. On the one hand there is nobody to act as a prop for his weak superego, while on the other the demands of the id are growing inexorably stronger. Walter appreciates the danger to sanity inherent in this situation when he puts his hero Allain into it:

Donc Allain d'abord connaîtra l'âme par le corps - puis il l'aimera seule et se passera de lui . . . il demande le surhumain, la chair se vengera . . .

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

Avec cela tous les doutes. L'ennui de la réalité le maintiendra prisonnier dans son rêve: il n'en sortira pas.

La folie est au bout.<sup>108</sup>

However, Walter chooses to ignore the danger, and significantly he does so by rejecting advice which his mother used to give him:

- Ma mère me disait: "Tu ne peux pas faire la vie à ton rêve; il faut que tu te fasses à la vie."  
"N'importe! il faut lutter: la lutte est belle même sans la victoire."<sup>109</sup>

Given this wilful decision to carry on with a course of action which he knows will lead to madness, it is obvious that Walter's ego is no longer performing properly its task of self-preservation.

The driving force behind Walter's wish to make life conform to his dream is his search for communion of souls with Emmanuèle. However, in order to achieve this, resistance from both sides must cease. The resistance in Emmanuèle's case is provided by both body and mind:

. . . cette fuite errante de ces deux âmes confondues, pour moi c'est l'infini bonheur que je rêve.  
Mais ton corps la retient captive, et ton esprit dominateur . . . à moins qu'en rêve peut-être, quand le corps se relâche et que l'esprit s'endort . . .<sup>110</sup>

Given Walter's abhorrence of the flesh, the obstacle provided by Emmanuèle's body is obvious, but of more interest is the

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 113.



influence of her "esprit dominateur." There is a petulant tone about this description of Emmanuèle's mind, and it recalls Walter's earlier exasperation with her reticence:

Ton esprit! Ah! que je lui voulais donc de mal autrefois; ton pauvre esprit qui s'effrayait des troubles de ton âme et s'évertuait à calmer ses transports.<sup>111</sup>

It would appear that Walter's enthusiastic quest for communion never received a wholehearted response from Emmanuèle. It was she, apparently, who countered Walter's excesses with the common sense which he seems to lack. While Emmanuèle is alive Walter's hopes are constantly frustrated, and it is significant that his last words before the announcement of her death are a wish for the liberation of her soul which death alone can provide: "Oh! si ton âme n'était captive! . . ."<sup>112</sup> Equally significant is his ambivalent reaction to the news of Emmanuèle's death:

Pleurer sa forme aimée que je ne verrai plus . . .<sup>113</sup>  
 . . . Ton âme échappée, maintenant libre . . .<sup>113</sup>

It is not difficult to accept that the joy at the freedom of Emmanuèle's soul outweighs the sadness at her death, for shortly thereafter we find Walter commenting on the death of Allain's loved one: "Elle meurt; donc il la possède . . ."<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

Death has removed Emmanuèle's resistance to the communion of souls.

At the same time Walter finds justification for his efforts to impose his vision on the world around him. This comes from Schopenhauer, whose definition of "the subject" lent itself perfectly to Walter's aims and was therefore welcomed with enthusiasm:

Ce qui connaît tout et n'est connu de personne, c'est le Sujet. Il est donc le support du monde.

Quelles exaltations. Crier à pleine voix cette phrase et se plonger dans cette pensée orgueilleuse.<sup>115</sup>

We have already seen that Walter, in the "Cahier blanc," was able to have a balanced view of Schopenhauer, but here the fervent tone with which he greets the German philosopher's apparently solipsist views suggests that this is no longer so. Schopenhauer's influence becomes all the more compelling when Emmanuèle dies. It is on the day after her death that Walter writes in his "Cahier" a long entry under the heading "Schopenhauer" in which he sets out his plans for achieving the communion of souls with Emmanuèle:

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 100. It is helpful to consider Gide's own reaction to Schopenhauer as given in "Ainsi soit-il": "Lors de mon initiation à la métaphysique allemande, j'étais resté longtemps tout émerveillé devant la phrase de Schopenhauer: 'Je suis donc le support du monde...' . . . rien n'existait qu'en fonction de moi. C'était grisant." (Journal II, p. 1177). The sense in which Gide, and therefore Walter, understood Schopenhauer's phrase is clearly indicated by the change, which we have underlined, from the third person to the first person.

Schopenhauer.

Perdre le sentiment de son rapport avec les choses, de sorte que la représentation se dégage toute pure et qu'aucune connaissance extérieure ne distraie de la connaissance intuitive . . . .

Si j'arrivais à contempler la chimère avec assez de fixité pour que mes yeux éblouis du mirage n'aient plus un seul regard pour les réalités ambiantes, la chimère inventée m'apparaîtrait réelle . . . .<sup>116</sup>

Walter is considering the possibility of his being able to create an imagined substitute reality which he can impose on external reality and in which he and Emmanuèle can meet on an ethereal plane. The conditional tense, however, as Ireland notes, betrays Walter's uncertainty as to his ability to do this.<sup>117</sup>

The reason for this doubt is not hard to find. It is true that when Emmanuèle dies Walter, like Allain, "possesses her," for there is no longer any resistance on her part to his ideal love. However, there is still opposition, and it comes from within himself. Just as Emmanuèle's mind formed a barrier between their souls so Walter's is opposed to the rejection of reality suggested above. "Perdre le sentiment de son rapport avec les choses" is a process directly opposed to the ego's function of maintaining contact between the organism and external reality. Such a break with reality might be acceptable on a short-term basis, but Walter's hope is for an eternal fusion of the souls, and this would mean

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>117</sup> cf. Ireland, op. cit., p. 40.

permanent alienation and madness. The ego in its role as preserver of the organism must oppose such a course of action, but at the same time it is the source of consciousness and is therefore the only means whereby Walter can experience the desired state. Walter describes the impossibility of its situation:

Oui! mais quand nous connaîtrons, nous n'aurons plus la raison pour le savoir . . . .  
 Nous serons plongés dans l'infini bonheur, sans plus cette douloureuse résistance du moi qui seule pourrait nous le faire sentir.<sup>118</sup>

If the obstacle to happiness is removed, the consciousness of that happiness is automatically eliminated at the same time, for they are both functions of the same entity. It is not difficult to see in this paradox a reflection of the dual function of the ego. On the one hand it has to mediate in the internal struggle between id and superego while on the other it must deal efficiently with external reality. For this latter task it has control over all the intellectual functions, and thus when Walter talks of his reason we may assume that it is to the externally orientated function of the ego that he is referring. Similarly, when he rejects his reason in favour of hallucination he is giving precedence to the inward looking function of the ego:

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<sup>118</sup> O.C. I, p. 150.

La raison devient inutile; il faut la répudier pour qu'elle ne vienne pas, fallacieuse, devant nos yeux hallucinés, lever ses arguments troubles . . . .119

This preference thus reflects the diversion of psychic energy from the ego's role as mediator with external reality and into its function as regulator of the internal balance of the personality. We have already noted that such a diversion of energy, according to Freud, can lead to total alienation from reality, to psychosis,<sup>120</sup> and that this was the threat hanging over Gide's head in 1890. Gide in the end escapes madness, but the accuracy of his description of the states of mind leading up to Walter's demise suggests that his margin of safety was not very great.

We are left in little doubt as to the eventual outcome of the struggle for energy between the two functions of Walter's ego. Throughout the "Cahier noir" we find exhortations to stifle his reason:

Voilà ce qu'il faut: engourdir la raison et que la sensibilité s'exalte.<sup>121</sup>

We know that his hold on reality is loosening when we see that even the prospect of death can no longer deter him from his struggle to level the barriers erected between him and Emmanuèle by his reason:

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. S. Freud, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

<sup>121</sup> O.C. I, p. 113.

Que la pensée s'arrête pour dormir - éternellement;  
- la sentir s'engourdir; - le court moment où l'on  
s'arrête de penser; la MORT. J'ai longtemps  
cherché à ne penser à rien: on arrive à saisir  
l'idée, intuitivement . . . .122

In his desperation he is prepared to accept death in exchange for the brief moment of joy between the cessation of thought and the final loss of consciousness. This description of the folly of Walter's attempts is succeeded and illuminated by an image of moths, attracted by his lamp, being destroyed by the intensity of the light which has drawn them to it:

. . . les papillons volettent autour de la lampe, et la flamme roussit leurs ailes; ils retombent endoloris, les papillons de nuit que les clartés attirent.123

Walter's fate is no different from that of the moths. For a brief moment he is reunited with Emmanuèle: "Ah! te voilà chère âme!."124 Immediately thereafter, however, his mind is overwhelmed by the cerebral fever which eventually kills him.

Gide has thus brought his demonstration to the required conclusion. If, in his eyes, "Un roman c'est un théorème,"125 then he might well have concluded this novel with Quod erat demonstrandum; for Madeleine can have been left in no doubt as to the warning contained in the Cahiers d'André Walter.

122 Ibid., p. 167.

123 Ibid., p. 168.

124 Ibid., p. 174.

125 Ibid., p. 95.

Walter, we have seen, has been taken from his condition at the end of the "Cahier blanc," where he resembles Gide, subjected to the loss of Emmanuèle and followed through the various stages of his gradually increasing preference for the world of his dreams until madness and death finally claim him. It is our contention that this process constitutes one of the "ideal lines"<sup>126</sup> which Ireland sees as underlying the work of art. The sexual theme and the moral theme are both subordinate to the double theme of love and madness. This is confirmed by Gide himself in his choice of a moral for André Walter's novel:

Et, comme il faut une morale, je dirai:  
Laissez les morts ensevelir les morts.  
 Oh! répandez sur les vivants la douloureuse affection  
 qui de votre âme déborde, ne cherchez pas au delà de  
 la mort de plus subtiles communions et de plus suaves  
 tendresses, il n'est pas de plus triste leurre. - - -  
 puis il ne faut pas de morale.<sup>127</sup>

This moral makes no direct reference to sexuality, nor does it allude to ethical questions. What it does point out is that Walter's madness is the result of his turning his back on reality in order to direct his love at an inaccessible being. This has been the downfall of Allain, will shortly be the cause of Walter's death, and, Madeleine may be expected to infer, may do the same to Gide if she persists in her

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Ireland, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>127</sup> O.C. I, p. 173. The Cahiers d'André Walter is presented as the notebooks in which his preparatory writings for his novel are found. Thus the moral for Allain will be the moral for the Cahiers.

refusal to marry him.

We know that Madeleine did refuse to marry Gide, and that he did not lose his sanity as a result. The reason for his survival while Walter succumbs is linked to the second of the two themes which were suggested by the conclusion of the "Cahier blanc." The first of these is the theme of alienation with which we have just dealt. The second is concerned with artistic creation. The choice offered to Walter at the end of the "Cahier blanc" was this: he could seek to impose his vision on external reality or he could attempt to embody it in his novel. Gide, we know, chose the latter course, and found salvation. André Walter, on the other hand, was gradually won over to the first choice, and there are indications that this was so because he did not succeed in writing his novel. It is true that Pierre Chrysis claims in his prefatory note that Walter did complete Allain.<sup>128</sup> However, one would be justified in asking why Chrysis chose to publish only the "Cahiers" if Walter had in fact completed the novel itself. Chrysis gives no reason for his choice, stating only that Allain will never be published. Our suggestion that Walter perhaps did not complete his novel is based on the last few lines of the Cahiers d'André Walter. Walter is insane and thinks that Emmanuèle is looking after

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<sup>128</sup> O.C. I, p. xvii.



him. He notes that he must avoid alerting Emmanuèle if he wishes to write:

. . . il ne faut pas qu'elle entende, - elle viendrait m'empêcher d'écrire: ils m'ont défendu: - c'est pour ça qu'ils m'ont sorti les phrases. - Ils ont fait un grand feu dans la chambre, - il fait froid!<sup>129</sup>

From this disjointed series of phrases one fact emerges: Walter wishes to write and is prevented from doing so by Emmanuèle. She and her companions have done so by "taking the sentences out of his head." Since Emmanuèle belongs to his dream world, one might infer from this that the creation of fantasy figures in life and the creation of the work of art are mutually exclusive. A further suggestion that Walter might not have finished Allain comes in the final image of the Cahiers:

Comme c'est blanc la neige! . . . comme on y serait bien pour dormir - c'est frais: - on dit qu'on y fait des beaux rêves. La neige est pure.<sup>130</sup>

The snow attracts Walter for two reasons: it is pure and it encourages dreams. The reference to Walter's chastity and its leading him to madness is evident. However, snow has one other quality which is not mentioned explicitly here: not only is it pure, it is sterile. It is thus possible to see in the snow image the suggestion that dreams are an

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.

indication of sterility.<sup>131</sup>

Although there may be doubt as to whether Walter finished his novel or not, it is certain that Gide completed the Cahiers d'André Walter, and this fact had far-reaching effects on his relationship with the world around him. The role which his first work of art played in his life is the subject of our next chapter.

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<sup>131</sup> We might indeed ask if this snow image is not a precursor of the polar landscape at the end of the Voyage d'Urien, where the corpse entombed in the ice is found to be holding a piece of blank paper. Cf. O.C. I, pp. 360-362.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ROLE OF THE CAHIERS D'ANDRÉ WALTER

The Cahiers d'André Walter failed to achieve at least one of the aims which Gide had set it, that of persuading Madeleine to marry him. It did, however, have a profound effect on his outlook on life. When one studies Gide's statements regarding what he intended in the Cahiers d'André Walter, one can see that his attitude towards the future was a mixture of a small amount of hope and a great deal of pessimism. His hope centred on his relationship with Madeleine, and was dashed by her refusal, in January, 1891, to marry him. His pessimism, on the other hand, is reflected in the fact that, with the exception of his reference to Madeleine, his statements of intent suggested no interest in the future, but rather a wish to give an account of the past:

... ce n'était point seulement mon premier livre,  
c'était ma Somme; ma vie me paraissait devoir s'y  
achever, s'y conclure.<sup>1</sup>

His first book was to be his last, the summation of his life up to that point and testimony to the fact that he could continue no longer.

<sup>1</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 247.

Given this black pessimism and given the destruction, by Madeleine's refusal, of the last vestiges of hope for the future, one might indeed expect that madness or suicide would follow. This, however, was not the case. Gide's reaction to Madeleine's refusal reveals an attitude completely opposed to his pre-Walter pessimism: "Tant pis, j'agirai autrement."<sup>2</sup> This implied readiness and ability to compromise marks an abrupt change from the rigid attitudes which caused Gide's behaviour pattern throughout his childhood and adolescence to oscillate between extremes. It is a willingness to adjust to the realities of life which forms part of a general feeling of relief and optimism which characterised Gide after the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter.

That Gide's change of outlook was the result of his having written the Cahiers seems to be borne out by a conversation which he had with Delay and which is quoted in the latter's study. Gide, it appears, had indeed considered the possibility of suicide at the time of the Cahiers, for, it was claimed, he later stated: "Si l'on m'avait empêché d'écrire, je me serais suicidé." When Delay asked Gide if he had in fact said this, Gide's answer was: "Je ne me souviens pas l'avoir dit, mais je me souviens l'avoir pensé."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Agenda, 1891, inédit. Quoted in Delay, op. cit., II, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Delay, op. cit., I, p. 575.

What is of interest here is not so much the fact that Gide had contemplated killing himself, but rather the reason which he gives for having rejected suicide. It was because he was able to write that he could face the future once more.

The act of creating a work of art, in this case the Cahiers d'André Walter, thus appears to have been sufficient to change Gide's attitude to life from one of deep pessimism to one of curiosity, if not of confidence, regarding the future. "Enfin je commençais de me douter que le monde était vaste et que je n'en connaissais rien."<sup>4</sup> It is the intention of this chapter to determine why the Cahiers d'André Walter had such a profound and beneficial effect on Gide. We will begin by considering the conditions in which Gide creates the work of art, and in this respect we will attempt to define what Gide means when he talks of "the absolute." The nature of the work of art itself will then be discussed in relation to the absolute. We will then investigate the different functions which art can fulfil for Gide because of the relationship between the work of art and the absolute in which it is created. Firstly, the cathartic role of art will be studied and compared to that of dreams and the various manifestations of the unconscious in conscious life which are referred to as "ivresse sans vin." We will then consider the qualities of the work of art which make it a

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<sup>4</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 247.

suitable means of countering the disintegration which Gide felt was threatening his personality in 1890. Finally, we will examine how the work of art permits Gide to discover his true identity in the present and to test possible developments in his personality for the future.

As in the case of most aspects of Gide's work, there is considerable disagreement about his approach to the work of art in the early part of his career. On the one hand we have Brée's view that at the time of the Cahiers d'André Walter artistic creation was a spontaneous outburst: "La poésie est pour lui un épanchement de l'âme."<sup>5</sup> On the other hand Lindsay suggests that Gide's early works betray a considerable amount of control by the author:

It is by the strictest kind of necessity that Gide's early characters are ruled: the author's will. The narrator occupies an ultra-privileged position which renders the characters, in an almost literal sense, puppets.<sup>6</sup>

Confirmation for Lindsay's view comes from Ireland's comment that, "The structure of the work as a whole has been abusively criticised; yet if it is undeniably something less than masterly, it is certainly motivated with some care; and there is no doubt that it is very satisfactorily adapted to the purpose it is called upon to serve."<sup>7</sup> Painter, in turn,

<sup>5</sup> Brée, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> M. Lindsay, "Time in Gide's Early Fiction," Symposium, XXVI, No. 1, Spring, 1972, pp. 42-43.

<sup>7</sup> Ireland, op. cit., p. 27.

supports Brée's view of the Cahiers d'André Walter as being uncontrolled: "The structure of the Notebooks is not so much complex as chaotic . . . the result is a bewildering farrago."<sup>8</sup>

In seeking to investigate the reasons for the influence which the Cahiers d'André Walter had on Gide, it is necessary to begin by determining the exact relationship between the author and his work. A work which is the result of disciplined, analytical control must surely affect its writer in a manner totally different from the effect of one which is the spontaneous outpouring of the author's soul. In this respect the conditions which Gide felt were necessary for the creation of the Cahiers d'André Walter play a very significant part.

Brée suggests that at that time Gide had no interest in the world around him: "A l'époque d'André Walter, André Gide est un jeune homme pour qui le monde extérieur n'existe pas."<sup>9</sup> This opinion appears to be confirmed by Gide himself. In his Journal entries of 1890, prior to the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter, one word springs to the attention immediately in the context of the conditions which he sought before beginning his work: the absolute. On March 18, for example, one finds him talking of the necessity of "L'illusion

<sup>8</sup>G. Painter, André Gide, London, A. Barker, 1951, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup>Brée, op. cit., p. 39.

de travailler dans l'absolu,"<sup>10</sup> a condition which he reiterates on May 8: "Il faut croire que c'est dans l'absolu que l'on travaille."<sup>11</sup> His entry of March 18 reveals that his need for the absolute increased as the time of writing André Walter drew near:

Mais où? La cellule rêvée; dans les Causses, le Dauphiné? Je pensais bien à la chambrette découverte dans Paris; mais la vie active est trop près; puis l'incognito ne serait pas possible; j'aurais l'esprit trop inquiet . . .<sup>12</sup>

It seems probable that the room which Gide rejects here is the sixth-floor room which he and Pierre Louys had discovered in the autumn of 1889, a room which he had then apparently considered to be quite suitable as a place to write, noting in his Journal: "Et s'enfermer là, avec le rêve de son oeuvre, et n'en sortir qu'avec elle achevée."<sup>13</sup> By March, 1890, Gide's need to abstract himself completely from "la vie active" had grown to such a degree that the only way to do so was to leave Paris. The fact that he took the not inconsiderable trouble to do precisely this when he was ready to begin the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter reveals just how much the absolute had become for him the sine qua non of artistic creation. It does not, however,

<sup>10</sup> Journal I, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 13.



reveal which attributes of the absolute made it so important.

Given the fact that Hegel was a philosopher in vogue in the literary circles of Paris at that time and that Gide took some of Hegel's work with him to Menthon, one might expect that Gide's conception of the absolute was influenced to some extent by the German's idealism. One's expectations would, however, be dashed by the definition of the absolute which Gide gives in retrospect in Si le grain ne meurt, for there is no mention of philosophical considerations at all, but rather a banal explanation accompanied by a plaintive description of the lengths to which he had to go in order to achieve the desired condition:

Au printemps je sentis le moment venu; mais, pour écrire mon livre, il me fallait la solitude. Un petit hôtel, au bord du minuscule lac de Pierrefonds, m'offrit un gîte provisoire. Le surlendemain Pierre Louis vint m'y relancer: force était de chercher plus loin. Je partis pour Grenoble, fouillai les environs . . . .<sup>14</sup>

The first condition of the absolute was solitude, a state which Gide found frustratingly difficult to obtain even before the summer of 1890: "Parfois des rages me prennent de lâcher tout . . . , d'envoyer promener tout le monde . . . , et d'élaborer ma vision."<sup>15</sup> The solitude required to write the Cahiers d'André Walter, we have noted, was

<sup>14</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 245.

<sup>15</sup>Journal I, p. 16.

gained at the expense of, among others, Pierre Louÿs. That which allowed him to work on his Traité du Narcisse in October, 1891, was obtained at the considerable price of separation from his cousins, one of whom was, of course, Madeleine:

Mes cousines sont parties. Je n'ose m'avouer ma joie de me retrouver seul . . . . J'ai repris le Narcisse; je crois que j'en sortirai.<sup>16</sup>

That this price was paid willingly, even joyfully, shows how high in his list of priorities came the isolation from which alone could spring the work of art.

Freedom from the immediate presence of other people does not, however, constitute the whole of the absolute for Gide. Indirect contact with others through reading was also a barrier to creation.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the absolute which Gide sought was as complete a withdrawal from external reality as was possible, an isolation both in time and in space. In terms remarkably similar to those of modern psychoanalytical techniques he describes the psychological tabula rasa which will permit him to create the Cahiers d'André Walter:

. . . je ne pourrai le faire que dans une atmosphère inconnue, inéprouvée. Il faut que mes sens soient désorientés, sans quoi je retomberai dans les ornières suivies, dans les rêveries des souvenirs. Il faut que la vie me soit toute neuve et que rien autour de

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 17. One notable exception to this rule seems to have been his correspondence with his mother.

moi ne me rappelle que, par le monde, il est d'autres choses.<sup>18</sup>

The state described here is a "point de départ": life is to be completely new in the sense that the past does not impinge upon his consciousness, that he will not consciously allow the view of life which will form the foundation of his work of art to be influenced by his previous attitudes.

Gide, however, is not only attempting to cut himself off from an awareness of himself in relation to the past. By his wish to have no knowledge of the world around him he shows that he is also seeking to abstract himself from the present. When he is writing the Cahiers d'André Walter the real present must cease to exist for him, to be replaced by the absolute which is impervious to the flow of new stimuli from the constantly changing external world.

In his Journal entry of May 8, 1890, for example, he points out the effect on him of reading the works of other writers:

Elles sont pour moi des causes d'excessif trouble et m'agitent à la fois toutes les idées dans la tête. Aucune n'est dominatrice, ou pour longtemps. Puis ce trafic d'idées me fait trop sentir combien elles ne sont que relatives. Il faut, lorsqu'on travaille, que l'idée où l'on s'achoppe vous soit unique.<sup>19</sup>

The ability to concentrate the whole of his consciousness on one idea to the exclusion of all others is for Gide a

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

necessary prerequisite to the creative act, but is impossible to achieve in the constant flux of life where external influences create a continuing confusion of ideas in his mind. There are two sources of this confusion. The first is mentioned here: it is the number of ideas demanding his attention. The second, although Gide does not refer to it here specifically, is the true key to Gide's problematic relationship to external reality in his youth. The number of ideas to which he can give his attention would not concern him were it not for the passage of time. Gide shows quite clearly, in a reference to his youth in Les Nourritures terrestres, that time, by obliging him to choose, was the enemy which had to be defeated:

Mais vous ne savez pas, vous ne pouvez savoir . . . la passion qui brûla ma jeunesse. J'enrageais de la fuite des heures. La nécessité de l'option me fut toujours intolérable; choisir m'apparaissait non tant élire, que repousser ce que je n'étais pas. Je comprenais épouvantablement l'étroitesse des heures, et que le temps n'a qu'une dimension; c'était une ligne que j'eusse souhaitée plus spacieuse, et mes désirs en y courant empiétaient nécessairement l'un sur l'autre.<sup>20</sup>

This is a qualitative approach to time rather than a quantitative one, for at any one moment he could respond in many different ways to the stimuli of reality, but can only choose one of these responses. It is in part for this reason that

<sup>20</sup> Romans, p. 183. For confirmation of the fact that this was indeed the case cf. Journal I, p. 28. A similar idea is expressed in the Traité du Narcisse in the symbol of the river of time. Cf. Romans, p. 4.

he feels dissatisfied with life, that he finds difficulty in adapting to his environment and in accepting his own reality. A full and satisfying relationship to his surroundings is denied him by the fact that his consciousness is constantly directed at the responses which he did not make, and is therefore occupied with the hypothetical rather than with the real. The absolute, by definition, excludes the relativity of external reality, and in so doing relieves the pressure which the passage of time imposes on him. In his isolation there is a minimum of new stimuli and hence the passage of time also is slowed to a minimum, for, as he states in the Traité du Narcisse: "... le temps ne fuit que par la fuite des choses . . . ." <sup>21</sup> In the stillness which ensues, a process of assimilation takes place, and the ideas already in his mind create an order of importance among themselves, a procedure which he describes in his Journal entry of May 8, 1890, in the following terms:

... les idées de nouveau s'agiteront; il faut les laisser faire; une dominera bientôt; alors se remettre à écrire. <sup>22</sup>

There is still the contrast between the idea chosen and those which are not, but since, in the absolute, time does not pass, there is not the sense of guilt which, in the view of the author of Les Nourritures terrestres, accompanies

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Journal I, p. 17.

the choice in life:

Je ne faisais jamais que ceci ou que cela. Si je faisais ceci, cela m'en devenait aussitôt regrettable, et je restais souvent sans plus oser rien faire, éperdument et comme les bras toujours ouverts, de peur, si je les refermais pour la prise, de n'avoir saisi qu'une chose.<sup>23</sup>

The guilt and paralysis spring from the fear and regret that, once the choice is made, those ideas which have not been selected will have been definitively denied existence. In the absolute, however, the moment--and thus the opportunity to give expression to the other ideas--does not pass.

There is one further result for Gide of the creation of the absolute, and it is the most important. In the absolute he not only ceases to be aware of the passage of time and of the presence of the world around him, but he also seems to lose his consciousness of his own existence. In a Journal entry of November, 1890, he describes the period during which he was writing the Cahiers d'André Walter in the following terms:

Je n'ai pas eu, depuis deux mois, un seul instant de monologue. Je ne suis même plus égoïste. Je ne suis même plus. Perdu du jour où j'ai commencé mon livre . . . .<sup>24</sup>

While writing his novel in the absolute he forgets himself, and this abandonment of his normal egocentricity is due, it is suggested, to the creative act.

<sup>23</sup> Romans, p. 183.

<sup>24</sup> Journal I, p. 18.

The importance of this discovery is reflected in the same Journal entry when Gide goes on to delineate a four-point "morale" which is obviously based on his experience of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter. The final point of this ethical plan of campaign is: "Se considérer soi-même comme un moyen; donc ne jamais se préférer au but choisi, à l'oeuvre."<sup>25</sup> There is at first sight nothing remarkable about an author's subordinating himself to his art, but in Gide's case the importance of the idea is immeasurable. The first sign that his plan is of more than ordinary significance is the fact that it is not presented as an aesthetic consideration, but rather as a moral precept. The ethical connotations of his self-negation in the absolute are further emphasised by the introduction of the concept of salvation: "Songer à son salut: égoïsme."<sup>26</sup> However, salvation is not understood here in its strictly religious sense. Gide makes this quite clear when he adds: "Ne pas se soucier de paraître. Être, seul est important."<sup>27</sup> His thoughts are of human, not divine, judgement. This is confirmed in a note to the Traité du Narcisse which he claims was written in 1890:

... tout doit être manifesté, même les plus funestes choses: "Malheur à celui par qui le scandale arrive,"

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

mais "Il faut que le scandale arrive." L'artiste et l'homme vraiment homme, qui vit pour quelque chose, doit avoir d'avance fait le sacrifice de soi-même.<sup>28</sup>

Scandal is a social, not a religious term, and the sacrifice which the artist must make before beginning his work of art is the abandonment of his artificial social self, the persona which protects him from the judgement of others. In other words, he must dare to be himself.<sup>29</sup>

For a man of Gide's nature this uncovering of his true self is impossible in the real life situation. Gide, we have noted in the previous chapter, is a victim of neurotic anxiety: he is afraid that if he loses control of his instincts they will cause him to do something which will lead to condemnation by other people. Evidence of this kind of anxiety can be found in Gide's Journal entry of June 10, 1891, where he blames his lonely and joyless childhood for his tendency to be too eager to please others:

Peut-être est-il très dangereux pour moi de voir les autres; j'ai toujours un trop vif désir de leur plaire; peut-être qu'il me faut la solitude. Il faut que j'ose franchement le reconnaître: c'est mon enfance solitaire et rechignée qui m'a fait ce que je suis.<sup>30</sup>

A consequence of this attitude to others is that before Gide can act he must feel sure of the consequences of

<sup>28</sup> Romans, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Journal I, p. 20: "Oser être soi. Il faut le souligner aussi dans ma tête."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 21.



his actions. However, his anxiety is accompanied and indeed caused by the weakness of his superego, and therefore he has no strong internalised criteria on the basis of which to choose a course of action. The result is a distrust of spontaneous action of any kind:

Je voudrais cheminer sur des routes sûres, qui mènent où j'aurais résolu d'aller; mais je ne sais pas; je ne sais pas ce qu'il faut que je veuille.<sup>31</sup>

It is in particular the insertion of "il faut que" which betrays Gide's awareness of and dependence on the judgement of others.

If we return to Gide's original statement that he lost his consciousness of his own existence when he was writing the Cahiers d'André Walter, we can now see that what was lost was his awareness of himself as the object of the judgement of his fellow men. In creating the absolute, Gide has retreated within himself and is protected against the influence and the demands of external reality. His aim, in preparation for writing the Cahiers d'André Walter, is "de m'enfermer en moi-même 'comme dans une tour' et d'élaborer ma vision."<sup>32</sup> He has in fact created a situation not unlike a dream where the ego breaks off its relations with the external world and accordingly removes inhibitions and

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

repressions which are no longer necessary.<sup>33</sup> Concepts such as responsibility and judgement therefore disappear as completely as do those of space and time. It is in this situation of freedom from external constraints that Gide creates the work of art which we will now consider briefly.

In order to study Gide's views in 1890 on the conditions which pertain within the work of art as distinct from those which characterise the absolute, it is necessary to turn to André Walter's notes for Allain.<sup>34</sup> These notes, which are to be found in the form of a long footnote at the beginning of the "Cahier noir," are accepted by most critics as a faithful representation of Gide's own ideas at that time.<sup>35</sup>

A study of these notes reveals that the work of art, born in the freedom of the absolute, reflects this freedom exactly. It is an internalised, substitute reality from which the world of external appearance is completely excluded:

Et comme le drame est intime, rien n'en apparaît au dehors, pas un fait, pas une image, sinon peut-être symbolique: la vie phénoménale absente . . . donc plus de pittoresque et le décor indifférent . . .<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Cf. S. Freud, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> The fact must not be ignored that Gide's considerations in his Journal of 1890 refer only to the conditions in which the Cahiers d'André Walter can be written, and not to the work itself. We will return to this distinction later in this chapter.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ireland, op. cit., pp. 31 and 49, and Brée, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>36</sup> O.C. I, p. 95.

This freedom from external reality is accompanied by a release from the domination of time: ". . . n'importe quand et n'importe où; hors du temps et de l'espace."<sup>37</sup> As in the case of the absolute, the extra-temporal world contained in the work of art is devoid of a sense of responsibility, for the truth to be found there is purely "une vérité théorique, absolue,"<sup>38</sup> in which the question of responsibility is, if anything, Brée suggests, a subject of study rather than a source of anxiety:

In every Gidian tale the relation of the time-sequence to the events narrated is the statement of a problem - a fundamental problem - the problem of the part played by chance, will, necessity, in the complex chain of consequences any action initiates.<sup>39</sup>

The absolute and the work of art thus share the same qualities which can be summed up in general as a freedom from the constraints of everyday existence, and this liberty opens up possibilities for Gide which are beyond his reach in real life. Gide confirms this in his considerations on "Littérature et Morale," written in 1897, but based on his experiences and observations of the previous seven years. He comments on the role which art has played in his life in the following terms:

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>39</sup> G. Brée, "Time Sequences and Consequences in the Gidian World," Yale French Studies, No. 7, 1950, pp. 54-55.

"Les choses sont perpétuellement en inéquilibre; de là leur écoulement. L'équilibre, c'est la "santé" parfaite; . . . mais il est irréalisable physiquement . . . ; réalisable seulement dans l'oeuvre d'art. L'oeuvre est un équilibre hors du temps, une santé artificielle.<sup>40</sup>

It is precisely the qualities which we have ascribed to the absolute and to the work of art which create this "artificial state of health," the temporary equilibrium which, in the case of the Cahiers d'André Walter, projected its beneficial influence on the author in real life.

The first possibility which springs to mind when one considers the freedom inherent in the process of artistic creation is that the work of art may have a cathartic effect on its author. Gide seems to suggest this when he says in Si le grain ne meurt: "L'inquiétude que j'y peignais, pour l'avoir peinte il semblait que j'en fusse quitte . . ."<sup>41</sup>

Nor was this a realisation to which Gide only came many years later, for he puts much the same idea into André Walter's mouth:

Je délivrerai ma pensée de ses rêveries antérieures, pour vivre d'une nouvelle vie; quand les souvenirs seront dits, mon âme en sera plus légère . . .<sup>42</sup>

Gide seems to have become vaguely aware, in the course of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter, that the work of art, a

<sup>40</sup> Journal I, p. 94.

<sup>41</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 257.

<sup>42</sup> O.C. I, p. 31.

substitute reality created in the absolute state where neither time nor responsibility exist, may allow full and uninhibited expression to what has hitherto been repressed in real life. Almost forty years later, Gide recognised that this was the motive behind the creation of André Walter and all the other doubles who followed him:

Mais on eût dit que ma propre pensée me faisait peur et de là vint ce besoin que j'eus de la prêter aux héros de mes livres pour la mieux écarter de moi. Certains, qui refusent de voir en moi un romancier, ont peut-être raison, car c'est plutôt là ce qui me conseille le roman, que de raconter des histoires.<sup>43</sup>

The role of the double is to relieve Gide of the responsibility for those ideas which he cannot openly, or even privately, acknowledge to be his own. Significantly, it is in his Journal entry of November, 1890, shortly after the completion of the Cahiers, that Gide first mentions this function of the double:

Le héros ne doit même pas penser à son salut. Il s'est volontairement et fatalement dévoué, jusqu'à la damnation, pour les autres; pour manifester.<sup>44</sup>

In its isolation from the real world, the Cahiers d'André Walter is comparable to the dream, for in neither is Gide aware of himself in relationship to external reality. If the work of art is the "épanchement de l'âme" which Brée suggests, then, like the dream, it should be a direct expression of what the conscious individual cannot accept. Jung

<sup>43</sup> Journal I, p. 900.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

points out, in his essay "Dream Analysis in its Practical Application":

The relation between conscious and unconscious is compensatory . . . . It is always helpful, when we set out to interpret a dream, to ask: What conscious attitude does it compensate?<sup>45</sup>

In the case of the Cahiers d'André Walter, we would suggest that the attitude which is compensated is primarily the inhibited approach to life which is a legacy of his "enfance solitaire et rechignée." The childhood need to "épaissir la vie"<sup>46</sup> to which Gide attributed his experience of the "seconde réalité" and which religion satisfied to a certain extent in later years, is reflected at the time of the Cahiers d'André Walter in the search for "ferveur." Although he may wonder whether he has exaggerated in his description of the atmosphere of that period, the following remark in Si le grain ne meurt indicates the importance for him of "ferveur":

Déjà sans doute n'ai-je épaissi que trop l'atmosphère de cette selve obscure où j'égarais, au sortir de l'enfance, mes aspirations incertaines et la quête de ma ferveur.<sup>47</sup>

In another statement in Si le grain ne meurt Gide defines "ferveur" while describing his state of mind when he was in

<sup>45</sup> C.G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, translated by W.S. Dell and C.F. Baynes, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1933, p. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 28.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 281-282.

Mention writing the Cahiers d'André Walter:

Dans la complète solitude où je vécus, je pus chauffer à blanc ma ferveur et me maintenir dans cet état de transport lyrique hors duquel j'estimais mal séant d'écrire.<sup>48</sup>

Fervour is a state of lyrical intoxication in which the spontaneous expression of his emotions is not inhibited because, in the solitude of the absolute, rational considerations of consequences and responsibility no longer apply. The resulting outpouring of his soul forms an obvious parallel to the various forms of "ivresse sans vin" which we noted in our preceding chapter. In Si le grain ne meurt Gide himself points to the relationship between the "Schaudern," which had caused him so much distress in his childhood, and the state of lyrical inspiration which brought unparalleled pleasure to him as a writer:

Depuis, les accès de cette étrange aura, loin de devenir moins fréquents, s'acclimatèrent, mais tempérés, maîtrisés, apprivoisés pour ainsi dire, de sorte que j'appris à n'en être effrayé, non plus que Socrate de son démon familier. Je compris vite que l'ivresse sans vin n'est autre que l'état lyrique, et que l'instant heureux où me secouait ce délire était celui que Dionysos me visitait. Hélas! pour qui connut le dieu, combien mornes et désespérées les périodes débilisées où il ne consent plus à paraître!<sup>49</sup>

Fervour, like the "Schaudern" and the other types of "ivresse sans vin," is a form of delirium in which the consciousness is invaded by the unconscious. Credence is lent this view

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 195-196.

by Gide's description of his state of mind before writing the Cahiers d'André Walter in 1890 and again prior to the creation of the Traité du Narcisse in 1891. In his Journal entry of June 4, 1891, he remarks:

- ° Je me retrouve maintenant dans le même état intellectuel qu'avant d'écrire André Walter: cette complexité inextricable des émotions, et ces systèmes de vibrations, que je notais déjà en janvier 90. J'en conclus que c'est peut-être l'état qui toujours chez moi précédera la production nouvelle et suivra les longs repos.<sup>50</sup>

The impression given here is one of growing pressure due to the conflicting demands for expression of the tangle of emotions which have been repressed for too long. One of the "raisons d'être" of the work of art, it would appear, is to grant expression to these conflicting emotions, and by so doing it transforms what has previously been a frightening experience into one which is not only welcomed, but deliberately encouraged.<sup>51</sup>

If the work of art compensates in general for Gide's normally inhibited nature, there is one aspect of his attitude to reality which is affected in particular. We have noted already in this chapter that Gide's conception of himself depends to a very large degree on the opinion which other people have of him, and that as a result he is extremely inhibited. It is equally true that at times he attempted to

<sup>50</sup> Journal I, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup> We have already noted that he saw as one of the main advantages of his isolation in Menton the fact that "je pus chauffer à blanc ma ferveur . . . ."



reverse the relationship so that, rather than being dependent on external reality for a view of himself, he imposes his view on the world around him. We have, for instance, seen in the preceding chapter both the attraction which the solipsist interpretation of Schopenhauer had for Gide, and Schlumberger's view that Gide tended to transfer certain of his own attitudes to Madeleine. This is a development which is almost exactly the reverse of that involved in the creation of the superego, a fact which is emphasised by André Walter's words as he describes just such a relationship which he wishes to create between himself and Emmanuèle:

L'éducation d'une âme; la former à soi - une âme aimante, aimée, semblable à soi pour qu'elle vous comprenne, et de si loin que rien ne puisse entre les deux qui les sépare; tisser et lentement des noeuds si compliqués, un tel réseau de sympathies, qu'elles ne puissent plus se détacher mais s'en cheminent parallèles par la force de l'habitude entretenue.<sup>52</sup>

One would have difficulty in finding a better description of the processes involved in the formation of the Superego, although here we are talking of a proposed relationship between two adults. If it was possible to carry out the intentions stated above, then the perfect compensation for Gide's normal relationship with his mother and his cousin would take place, for he would change from being dominated to being dominant.<sup>53</sup> However, for André Walter, as for Gide in

<sup>52</sup> O.C. I, p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> We have already noted that Gide subconsciously identified Madeleine with his mother in an inhibiting role. See above pp. 78-79.

real life, so long as mother and cousin are alive there is no hope of achieving this reversal of role in more than the most ephemeral way, for both are resistant to his efforts. It is Walter's mother, indeed, who warns him against attempting to distort the reality of life in order to make it conform to his dream,<sup>54</sup> while he has no illusions regarding his ability to dominate Emmanuèle:

- Ton esprit despote et rétif. - Il te voulait dominatrice . . . . Il me fallait vite obéir, ou bien tu t'écarterais de moi: c'était le silence jusqu'à ma soumission. Tu savais que je te reviendrais toujours: voilà ce qui te faisait forte; je n'étais pas si sûr de toi; je cédaï vite.<sup>55</sup>

It is only when his mother and Emmanuèle die that André Walter can claim to have any form of control over them. Thus it is only after the death of his mother that André Walter can dismiss her warning:

- "Tu ne peux pas faire la vie à ton rêve." N'importe! Il faut lutter: la lutte est belle même sans la victoire.<sup>56</sup>

Similarly it is only after Emmanuèle's death that Walter can fulfil his wish to mould her soul to his, for it is only then that her very existence depends on his thinking of her:

Ton existence maintenant? rien qu'en moi: tu vis parce que je te rêve, lorsque je te rêve et seulement alors; c'est là ton immortalité. Tu ne vis que dans ma pensée.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Cf. O.C. I, p. 126.

<sup>55</sup> O.C. I, p. 60.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

Walter can now in fact do what his mother had told him was impossible: he can make Emmanuèle conform to his dreams of her, for she now exists only in his mind. Here is the perfect compensation for Walter's previous acceptance of his domination by Emmanuèle and his mother, and it is to be expected that Gide, inasmuch as he identified with his double, would derive as much satisfaction from this expression of a hitherto repressed desire as Walter does:

Chère âme qu'il m'est doux que tu vives par la seule vertu de mon amour vivace! C'est par moi que tu vis, par moi!<sup>58</sup>

Indeed Gide, the novelist, has just as much control over Madeleine and his mother as has Walter over the two women in his life, for, by shutting himself up in the absolute, he cuts himself off from contact with external reality and therefore with his mother and Madeleine. The deaths of Walter's mother and of Emmanuèle are thus the fictional equivalent of Gide's exclusion of Madeleine and his mother from his consciousness by retreating within the absolute, and Walter's reconstitution of Emmanuèle by "dreaming her" reflects Gide's creation of a substitute, and more amenable, Madeleine in the novel.<sup>59</sup>

Gide thus finds that the absolute gives him freedom to do what Walter's mother warns against: to make life, in the shape of his fictional reality, conform to his dream. It

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Ireland, op. cit., p. 36, note 4.

allows him to create and to control his own reality, a reality which is as independent of external influence as the dream, and which releases the contents of the unconscious from the repressions which in normal, conscious life deny them expression. Without doubt it is this cathartic function of the work of art which is the most obvious and the most satisfying in the short term because of the pleasure involved in the release of psychological tension. However, it would be wrong to suppose that the work of art saved Gide from madness solely because it served as a means of expressing repressed attitudes. There were, after all, other ways of achieving this end: dreams and all the different manifestations of the "ivresse sans vin" did precisely this. Equally we must ask why André Walter, whose life apparently mirrors Gide's, should succumb to madness while Gide escapes. There must therefore be some factor which distinguishes the work of art from dreams, from the various forms of the "ivresse sans vin" and from André Walter's efforts, and which gives art its unique therapeutic value for Gide.

In order to isolate this factor we will refer to a long and important entry in Gide's Journal in which he discusses the relationship between author and work. This entry was written in the late summer of 1893 and is concerned principally with La Tentative Amoureuse, but Gide states that it applies equally to the Cahiers d'André Walter and to the

Traité du Narcisse.<sup>60</sup> Gide's interest centres on the effect which the work has on the writer:

J'ai voulu indiquer, dans cette Tentative Amoureuse, l'influence du livre sur celui qui l'écrit, et pendant cette écriture même. Car en sortant de nous, il nous change, il modifie la marche de notre vie. . . .<sup>61</sup>

The fact that the effect is felt during the writing itself points to a cathartic function, but when Gide goes on to describe how artistic creation affects him it is obvious that there is more to catharsis than the opening of the flood-gates of the unconscious:

Donc j'étais triste parce qu'un rêve d'irréalisable joie me tourmenté. Je le raconte, et cette joie, l'enlevant au rêve, je la fais mienne; mon rêve en est désenchanté; j'en suis joyeux.<sup>62</sup>

It is quite clear from this that Gide considers the dream to be totally different from the work of art. The dream is a source of torment to him although it is joyful in itself, and this is because the joy is inaccessible to him so long as it remains a property of the dream. Since the dream belongs to the realm of the unconscious, one must conclude that the self of which he is talking here is the conscious self and that in order to allow this self to experience the joy of the dream one must first extract the joy from the dream and bring it into consciousness by means of the creative act. The value of the work of art as a cathartic agent therefore lies in the

<sup>60</sup> Journal I, p. 41.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

fact that, unlike the dream, it allows Gide to be conscious of the release of the repressed elements in his psyche.

This Journal entry also points out the difference between Gide and his characters, and in so doing further defines the relationship of art to his conscious and unconscious selves:

Luc et Rachel aussi veulent réaliser leur désir; mais, tandis que, écrivant le mien, je le réalise d'une manière idéale, eux, rêvant à ce parc, dont ils ne voyaient que les grilles, veulent y pénétrer matériellement; ils n'en éprouvent aucune joie.<sup>63</sup>

Luc and Rachel fail to realise their dreams and so also, by implication, does André Walter, because they attempt to do so without taking into consideration the resistance of the real world which is not under their control. In the case of Luc and Rachel the real world rejects their attempts to impose the form of their dream on it, excluding them in a manner which recalls Gide's own rebuff by nature at the edge of the pool in Brittany.<sup>64</sup>

We find the same situation with André Walter. A month before his death he recounts a dream which he has had and which he has succeeded in recreating in the waking state. His condition, while he is reliving the dream, has all the characteristics of the "ivresse sans vin." The sudden violence of the outpourings from his soul--"je marchais comme

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. O.C. I, p. 11: "... j'en étais méchamment exclus; ça n'avait pas besoin de moi pour centre..."

dans le délire," "j'allais comme un homme ivre," "[d]es enthousiasmes infinis me secouaient"<sup>65</sup>--suggest the invasion of the conscious mind by the forces of the unconscious. At the same time he is able to create a substitute reality of his own: "Je jouissais douloureusement de ma solitude; je la peuplais d'êtres aimés . . . ."<sup>66</sup> This alienation from true reality, if prolonged, is nothing other than madness. However, Walter's conscious ego can still assert itself and regain contact with external reality. At first it detracts from the pleasure afforded by the substitute reality which he can only enjoy "douloureusement," and finally it drags him back to the pain and solitude of conscious reality:

Mais j'étais tout seul; alors un grand frisson m'a pris, et j'ai pleuré la fuite insaisissable du rêve . . . .<sup>67</sup>

The dream shares the shortcoming of all forms of "ivresse sans vin" in real life: it is of extremely short duration.

André Walter, ignoring the warning of his mother, attempts to prolong the period of euphoria, of subordination of reality to his dreams, by the use of the will:

Si j'arrivais à contempler la chimère avec assez de fixité pour que mes yeux éblouis du mirage n'aient plus un seul regard pour les réalités ambiantes, la chimère inventée m'apparaîtrait réelle . . . .<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 156-157.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

However, the will proves to be incapable of maintaining the concentration required to allow his dream to supplant reality and the dream appears once more as a manifestation of the unconscious:

Ce qui manque, c'est la puissance d'attention continue: elle est trop souvent défaillante, et l'image évoquée redevient aussitôt mirage.<sup>69</sup>

The end result of Walter's persistent attempts to create reality in the image of his dreams is the madness anticipated in his recreation of the dream.

The gulf between the realms of conscious reality on the one hand and the unconscious on the other cannot be bridged by any of the means discussed above. The dream is inaccessible to the conscious self, while André Walter's efforts and the types of "ivresse sans vin" are equally ineffectual in that in real life the recreation of the dream is of frustratingly short duration unless the price of madness and death is paid. Art, on the other hand, Gide says in his Journal entry of 1893, does allow him to overcome the incompatibility of the conscious and the unconscious. By writing down his dream he is able to realise it in a permanent fashion. How he does this is suggested in a Journal entry of May 15, 1892. Here Gide shows quite clearly that he is aware that one function of art is to allow the artist to bring together opposites which are totally incompatible:

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<sup>69</sup> ibid.



Deux facultés vraiment extraordinaires du poète; la permission qu'il a de s'abandonner aux choses, quand il le veut, sans se perdre; et de pouvoir être naïf consciemment.<sup>70</sup>

The poet can be spontaneous but, in spite of the abandon suggested by this, he can still retain a certain control, and in particular he can choose when he will be spontaneous. In the second place, he claims, the poet can be "consciously naive," that is, he can be innocently unthinking, and therefore uninhibited, in his relationship to his environment, while at the same time being conscious of the fact that he is so, and deliberately maintaining this attitude.

This seemingly impossible task is achieved through the creation of the double, according to Gide: "Ces deux facultés sont réductibles du reste au seul don de dédoublement."<sup>71</sup> We would suggest, however, that "dédoublement" is made possible and effective only through the creation of the absolute. We have noted that the work of art takes on the qualities of the absolute state in which it is created, and have stated that it is because it is totally isolated from reality that it serves as an excellent means of expressing what is normally repressed. We did, however, differentiate between the work of art and the absolute, noting that the former is described in the Cahiers d'André Walter, while the

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<sup>70</sup> Journal I, p. 32.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

latter is defined in Gide's Journal. This distinction was made because there is one quality which the absolute possesses and which is not shared by the work of art. The absolute state in which Gide creates the work of art differs from the latter in that it is a voluntary state. If one returns to Gide's references to the absolute in his Journal, one finds that they are not as clear-cut as they appear at first sight. In his entry for March 18, 1890, for example, we note that it is not simply of the absolute that he writes, but of the illusion of working in the absolute, which is something quite different and much more complex. Similarly, we find that in his entry of May 8, 1890, it is not a question of working in the absolute, but rather of having to believe that one is working in the absolute. These two entries anticipate Gide's reflections on the poet's qualities in 1892. The reference to the illusion of the absolute in the first parallels his allusion to the poet's ability to be "consciously naive" in that it is an illusion of which he will be conscious. The May 8 entry, on the other hand, emphasises the fact that the absolute is a state which requires considerable effort to achieve. Both entries, in addition, underline the fact that the absolute is a voluntary state, for both refer to Gide's plans to create it, stating the conditions which he requires in order to produce the work of art, and, especially in the second, carefully detailing how he intends to achieve these conditions by a

judicious alternation of reading, of contemplation and of writing.<sup>72</sup>

The absolute is thus an ambiguous state, partly the spontaneous expression of the unconscious and partly the awareness on the part of the conscious self that it is permitting the "épanchement de l'âme" to take place. As such it is the ideal means of reconciling the two parts of Gide's personality which have shown themselves to be incompatible otherwise. In conscious reality, we have seen, manifestations of the unconscious are repressed, and even when they burst through the repressive barriers they are a source of fear or regret. In the euphoria of the "ivresse sans vin," on the other hand, the intervention of conscious thought means an immediate and equally depressing return to the inhibitions of reality.

Gide's Journal entry of May 8, 1890, suggests a possible reason for the absolute's privileged position as intermediary between the conscious and the unconscious. In this entry he describes the technique which he will apply to writing the Cahiers d'André Walter. This technique consists of alternating periods of feverish, concentrated writing during which the outside world is virtually excluded from his consciousness and periods of complete openness to external

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<sup>72</sup> ibid., pp. 16-17.

influence.<sup>73</sup> These alternating states form an interesting parallel to the pattern of sleep and wakefulness, and suggest that the absolute may be compared to the "seconde réalité" of which Delay noted:

Ce sentiment d'une seconde réalité, qui n'est ni le réel de l'état de veille ni le rêve de l'état de sommeil, il l'éprouvait surtout dans l'état intermédiaire à la veille et au sommeil.<sup>74</sup>

When Delay goes on to define the "praedormitio" as "l'instant où se détendent les synthèses mentales qui assurent l'adaptation au réel et l'attention à la vie...,"<sup>75</sup> the similarity between absolute and "seconde réalité" becomes clearer and more illuminating. The "seconde réalité" is characterised, not by a complete shutdown of the mental processes which govern consciousness, but by a relaxation of these processes which in particular seems to reduce the ability to appreciate consequences without the general awareness of reality around him being affected.<sup>76</sup> When this parallel is applied to the absolute, the value of this state immediately becomes clear. It is because there is a lack of awareness of external reality, inasmuch as it is a source of critical judgement on his actions, that Gide can unreservedly open his soul and his unconscious in his writing. On the other hand, there is still the residual consciousness which

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Delay, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> This, we noted in Chapter II, is particularly evident in the coach incident in *Britanny*.

distinguishes both the "seconde réalité" and the absolute from the realm of dreams.

The absolute, therefore, like the "second réalité," serves as a transitional state between the conscious and the unconscious. Its existence allows Gide to function in any one of three states of consciousness: the first is the normal consciousness of everyday life in which he feels the frustration of his unrealised dreams; secondly, there is the condition which pertains within the work of art and in dreams, and which is characterised by freedom from all conscious inhibitions; finally, there is the absolute which, by insulating the work of art from reality, guarantees its freedom, while at the same time it maintains a hold on reality by retaining a certain amount of conscious control.

These three states of consciousness correspond to three identities which Gide can take up: André Gide the young man who in real life is beset by seemingly irreconcilable conflicts in his personality, André Walter with whom Gide at times identifies and who expresses in the work of art what the conscious Gide represses, and finally there is André Gide the author who has found a way of reconciling the tendencies epitomised by the first two. It is indeed André Gide the author who saves André Gide the man from the fate of André Walter, and he does this by creating a situation which closely resembles the ideal being sought by both of them:

... un nirvana prodigieux, ou le "moi" tout entier se fondrait, s'abîmerait en extase et garderait pourtant la volontaire conscience de son évanouissement; ce serait comme un néant voluptueusement perceptible.<sup>77</sup>

Given the number of mutually exclusive elements which have to co-exist in order to allow Nirvana to be realised, it is hardly surprising that André Walter's search ended in madness and death and that Gide in real life was constantly aware of the frustration of his hope for the integration implied here. However, the reference to the "moi" which must be suppressed, yet at the same time remain conscious of its suppression, gives a clue as to the manner in which Gide the author does in fact achieve the ideal.

If we consider the "moi" in terms of the Freudian psychology which we introduced in Chapter II, we can identify it as the ego which has the function of mediating between the demands of the id and the superego and the external world. Gide's problematic relationship with external reality, we have noted, is due in large part to the fact that in his case the ego does not control sufficient psychic energy to regulate both the id and the superego and at the same time ensure full interaction with his environment. The absolute and the creation of the double solve this problem by dividing it. Gide, as the author, does not have one single ego at his disposal, but two; he does not have one single reality

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<sup>77</sup> O.C. I, p. 150.

in which to exist, but two. He has his own and he has André Walter's.

During the actual writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter neither author nor character appears to need the ego in its role as an agent of interaction with external reality. Within the work of art, doubly insulated from reality by the absolute, André Gide the author, inasmuch as he identifies with André Walter, does not need this function of the ego for there is no changing environment to which he need relate, but rather a stable theoretical field:

Non point une vérité de réalisme, contingente fatalement; mais une vérité théorique, absolue (du moins humainement).<sup>78</sup>

The ego can therefore devote almost the totality of its psychic energy to its role as mediator between the conflicting demands of the id and the superego. However, the parenthetical qualification, which in its wider context is contrasted to ("littérairement parlant"),<sup>79</sup> shows that this can be done with impunity only by the author, and not by the character. It is only for Gide that the environment is theoretical. For André Walter it is real, and when Gide imposes his suspension of the reality function on his hero, this entails for the latter an ever-increasing alienation from reality. Thus, Walter is able to accept with equanimity, even amusement, the possibility of his becoming mad before

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

Allain:

La course à la folie, - lequel des deux arrivera le premier, d'Allain ou de moi? Je parie pour Allain . . . . Lequel des deux grimpera sur l'autre? - C'est très amusant cette course; on fournit tout soi-même, parieur, lutteur, adversaire.<sup>80</sup>

This amused disbelief in reality is the attitude which, we have seen, characterises Gide, especially in moments of stress, and which in 1890 he feels is leading him towards insanity. The ego has ceased to perform efficiently its task of self-preservation, due to the same excessive investment of psychic energy in the internal conflict between id and superego that makes Gide's hold on reality so tenuous.

Gide's Journal entry of May 8, 1890, suggests that he, too, is isolated from reality when he is in the process of writing:

Il faut travailler avec acharnement, d'un coup, et sans que rien vous distraie; c'est le vrai moyen de l'unité de l'oeuvre.<sup>81</sup>

However, the important point is that it is Gide the author who is speaking here, and that, while Walter's ego in its role as mediator between id and superego is concerned with ethical value judgements, Gide is discussing his work. Having inflicted the problem of moral values on André Walter, Gide's ego is free to deal with the question of aesthetic values. The advantage of the aesthetic field is that it does

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>81</sup> Journal I, p. 16.



not entail as much conflict within Gide's psyche as does the ethical, if for no other reason than the lack in his artistic education of a repressive figure like his mother. Thus, the psychic energy of the ego is not unequally divided as it is when Gide is faced with the problems of life, and the ego can therefore function comfortably both as mediator of the internal forces of the psyche and as the factor which assures contact with external reality. It can do this especially because the creative act can be broken up into two separate aspects, to each of which corresponds one of the functions of the ego. These aspects are content and form.

A further statement in Gide's Journal entry of May 8, 1890, shows the ego in its first role, and this is specifically in the period of inspiration when, after a period of intensive reading ". . . les idées de nouveau s'agiteront; il faut les laisser faire; une dominera bientôt; alors se remettre à écrire."<sup>82</sup> The strangely passive note struck here suggests that there is no conscious choice of idea to be expressed. The feeling that the idea selects itself is due, we would suggest, to the fact that the ego is working at its subconscious level of arbiter in the struggle between id and superego and makes the choice without reference to external reality.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

It would appear from the first quotation from the May 8 entry that the writing aspect of the creative act is equally divorced from reality. However, it is important to note that this is a description of the technique for writing the "édition ut varietur,"<sup>83</sup> and not the finished work. It is the stylistic and organisational effort required to produce the final version of the work of art which marks the activity of the ego in its role of ensuring contact with external reality. Delay makes this point when he talks of:

... le temps de retour à la réalité qu'est la patiente objectivation dans les conventions collectives du langage, dans ses chaînes, selon les lois communes du discours.<sup>84</sup>

It is at this point that the importance of the initial question of this chapter is seen. Is Brée's assessment of the Cahiers d'André Walter correct: "L'oeuvre est chaotique"?<sup>85</sup> Or is there indeed a strong formal control discernible in the work? The critical appraisals of Gide's contemporaries quoted by Ireland tend to support the latter view. Marcel Drouin, for example, in a letter to Gide, dated October 19, 1890, sees an order beneath the chaos which first springs to the eye:

L'unité du livre est, je crois, aussi forte qu'elle pouvait l'être: on ne la saisit pas au premier regard,

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Delay, op. cit., I, p. 596.

<sup>85</sup> Brée, op. cit., p. 35.

parce que cette marche du désespoir calme à la folie ne va pas d'une seule teneur, mais par soubresauts, avec des arrêts, des retours, des rappels de souvenirs qui déroutent . . . .<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, while Firmin Roz writes in L'Ermitage of May 5, 1891 of "cette âme spontanée,"<sup>87</sup> Henri de Régnier, writing in the March-April number of La Wallonie, points out that the spontaneity of the soul is accompanied by the order of the mind:

Le style est délicat, un peu grêle, distingué. C'est l'oeuvre d'un esprit ordonné, chaleureux et très apte aux métaphysiques subtiles . . . .<sup>88</sup>

Ireland himself notes that Gide must not be identified with Walter:

. . . his progress from naïve confidence to confusion and defeat is foreseen, planned, and graduated by a creator, who, to be sure, presides over his destiny with a highly privileged insight, but who, from first to last, feels no need whatever to share it.<sup>89</sup>

While we could not necessarily agree with this view of the Gide/Walter relationship with regard to the "Cahier blanc," it would certainly seem to apply to the "Cahier noir." Here the epigraph "Pro remedio animae meae . . ." suggests a conscious aim, whether one ascribes it to Gide the author or to André Walter. Even in this latter case Ireland's point is not invalidated, for the epigraph would surely then be seen

<sup>86</sup>Quoted in Ireland, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

as the expression of an ironic intention on Gide's part. Certainly, as the "Cahier noir" progresses towards its conclusion and we see André Walter moving into a more and more extreme position we become gradually more aware of the essential difference between author and hero which Gide points out in the Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs:

Ce qui manque à chacun de mes héros, que j'ai taillés dans ma chair même, c'est ce peu de bon sens qui me retient de pousser aussi loin qu'eux leurs folies.<sup>90</sup>

This common sense is Gide's hold on reality which is guaranteed by the conscious discipline of writing as described by Delay. Walter's madness comes about because he does not succeed in capturing the contents of the unconscious by the creative act. This is brought out most clearly by a description of his mental state not long before his death:

Comme par une fenêtre qui s'ouvre s'enfuient des oiseaux encagés - tout à coup, je ne sais quelle cloison s'étant rompue, j'ai vu s'envoler des pensées vagabondes . . . . D'abord elles ont passé très lentes; j'étais triste comme d'un adieu; je les reconnaissais toutes: c'étaient des paysages vus, des gestes amis, des sourires. - J'aurais voulu les retenir; mais, malgré le deuil que j'avais de leur fuite, je demeurais inerte, amusé du spectacle.

Puis elles se sont pressées tumultueuses, de grands lambeaux de vie qui s'éclairaient brusquement - et puis qui sautaient dans le noir . . . .<sup>91</sup>

The similarity between the state described here and the "ivresse sans vin" cannot be missed. However, Walter's reaction is one of sadness, a sense of loss as he impotently

<sup>90</sup> O.C. XIII, p. 52.

<sup>91</sup> O.C. I, p. 164.

watches great shreds of his life flash into his consciousness briefly before disappearing forever, and the final image of total darkness seems to predict his definitive loss of contact with reality and eventual death. It is Gide's ability to retain these "vagabond thoughts" by expressing them in the controlled manner of the work of art that saves him from a similar fate, and in his Lettres à Angèle he shows that he has learned this lesson:

C'est son oeuvre que l'artiste doit ordonner, et non le monde qui l'entoure.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, Gide accepts that his salvation is due to the combination of spontaneous inspiration and controlled expression, which has already been suggested in his ascribing to the poet the quality of being able to be "naïf consciemment." The epigraph "Pro remedio animae meae" which, we have already noted, marks the beginning of the "Cahier noir," suggests that Gide became aware of this function of art in the course of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter,<sup>93</sup> but perhaps the clearest expression of it appears in his Journal entry of September, 1894:

Les choses les plus belles sont celles que souffle la folie et qu'écrit la raison. Il faut demeurer entre les deux, tout près de la folie quand on rêve, tout près de la raison quand on écrit.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup>O.C. III, p. 214.

<sup>93</sup>Cf. also Brée, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>94</sup>Journal I, p. 50.

André Walter succumbs because, while he shares with Gide the "folie" of inspiration, he lacks the conscious, rational discipline which turns this raw material into a work of art. It is significant, we would suggest, that when Gide's pessimism turns to optimism in the course of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter it is not only because he dissociates himself from his hero, but also because he sees the future in terms of literary production:

. . . par moments, pourtant, bondissant hors de mon héros, et tandis qu'il semblait dans la folie, mon âme, enfin délivrée de lui, . . . entrevoyait des possibilités vertigineuses. J'imaginai une suite de "Sermons laïques", à l'imitation des Sources du père Gratry . . . Je projetais aussi certain récit, inspiré par la mort d'Anna, qui devait s'appeler "l'essai de bien mourir" et qui devint plus tard la Porte Etroite.<sup>95</sup>

The value of the work of art for Gide thus lies in the fact that it allows him to give expression to the conflicting elements in his personality. The contents of the unconscious find an outlet in the inspiration of the work, in the "fond," while the conscious manifests itself in the organisational activity required to give artistic form to the chaotic and spontaneous raw material. There is, however, a further benefit of the creative act for Gide, one which is linked to the aesthetic catharsis which we have just discussed but which goes far beyond it. In order to investigate this new aspect of art, we will begin with a statement by Jung on the

<sup>95</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 247.

relationship between the conscious and the unconscious.

Jung's view, we suggest, would be accepted by the majority of modern psychologists, and indicates clearly the role of the Cahiers d'André Walter for Gide:

The unconscious is not a demonic monster, but a thing of nature that is perfectly neutral as far as moral sense, aesthetic taste and intellectual judgement go. It is dangerous only when our conscious attitude towards it becomes hopelessly false. And this danger grows in the measure that we practise repressions. But as soon as the patient begins to assimilate the contents that were previously unconscious, the danger from the side of the unconscious diminishes. As the process of assimilation goes on, it puts an end to the dissociation of the personality and to the anxiety that attends and inspires the separation of the two realms of the psyche. That which my critic feared - I mean the overwhelming of consciousness by the unconscious - is most likely to occur when the unconscious is excluded from life by repressions, or is misunderstood and depreciated.<sup>96</sup>

The "dissociation of the personality" and the "anxiety that attends and inspires the separation of the two realms of the psyche" are evident in both Gide and André Walter. Similarly, both experience the overwhelming of consciousness by the unconscious in the "Schaudern" and the other forms of "ivresse sans vin." However, while Walter's increasingly desperate use of his will to suppress his sexuality exemplifies Jung's point that danger increases with the amount of repression, Gide takes the opposite route.

Jung states that integration of the personality is a consequence of the assimilation into consciousness of those

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<sup>96</sup> C.G. Jung, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

elements which have been repressed into the unconscious. This is exactly what the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter does for Gide, thanks to the creation of the absolute and subsequently of the double. The absolute, we have noted, is the intermediate state between the conscious and the unconscious. In it Gide is free enough of his conscious reservations to open the gates of the unconscious to allow the previously repressed elements to be expressed in the figure of André Walter. At the same time there is in the absolute a residual consciousness which allows Gide to be aware of the expression of these elements, just as he was conscious of his instinctive actions in rescuing the coachman in Brittany without being able to inhibit them. The work of art thus allows Gide to become conscious of those elements which in normal life are confined to the unconscious and are noticeable only by the psychological tension which they cause. Consequently, when Gide does become aware of that part of him which is normally repressed, he feels that he has created it. This, we would suggest, is the sense of Edouard's words in

Les Faux-Monnayeurs:

Rien n'a pour moi d'existence que poétique (et je rends à ce mot son plein sens) - à commencer par moi-même. Il me semble parfois que je n'existe pas vraiment, mais simplement que j'imagine que je suis. Ce à quoi je parviens le plus difficilement à croire c'est à ma propre réalité. Je m'échappe sans cesse et ne comprends pas bien, lorsque je me regarde agir, que celui que je vois agir soit le même que celui qui regarde, et qui



s'étonne, et doute qu'il puisse être acteur et contemplateur à la fois.<sup>97</sup>

The poetic reality, which is the only true and complete reality for Gide, is that created by the integration, through the work of art, of the authentic but normally repressed self and the conscious but artificial and inhibited self of everyday life. Such completeness is unattainable in real life where he exists as actor and spectator, the latter doubting whether he can identify with the former. It is for this reason, no doubt, that as early as 1891 Gide rejects external reality as an accurate mirror of his total being: "Le monde m'est un miroir, et je suis étonné quand il me reflète mal."<sup>98</sup>

That the Cahiers d'André Walter aroused in Gide an intense interest in his identity is testified by the frequent appearance, in his Journal entries from November, 1890 on, of considerations on sincerity and on the question of "être" and "paraître."<sup>99</sup> Evidence that this interest was whetted principally by the assimilation of the unconscious into the conscious is provided by a Journal entry of July 3, 1930, in which Gide, now with the benefit of knowledge of Freud, remarks on the drive for integration which is the fundamental motive of all his works:

<sup>97</sup> Romans, pp. 987-988.

<sup>98</sup> Journal I, p. 20.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Journal I, pp. 17-21.

Le seul drame qui vraiment m'intéresse et que je voudrais toujours à nouveau relater, c'est le débat de tout être avec ce qui l'empêche d'être authentique, avec ce qui s'oppose à son intégrité, à son intégration.<sup>100</sup>

Here integration is accompanied by the much richer concept of integrity, which has moral connotations as well as its sense of wholeness. During the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter Gide was shown by his double some of the possibilities which had lain repressed within him. Artistic creation was an awakening and at the same time a liberation. However, the freedom is accompanied by a sense of trepidation, for it is not enough for the repressed elements to be liberated; they must also co-exist in his consciousness with the attitudes which had previously driven them out. This is perhaps best summed up by Gide himself in Si le grain ne meurt when he poses the two questions which faced him as he prepared to leave the security and the constrictions of family life:

Au nom de quel Dieu, de quel idéal me défendez-vous de vivre selon ma nature? Et cette nature, où m'entraînerait-elle, si simplement je la suivais?<sup>101</sup>

If the first of these questions reflects Gide's irritation at the restrictions placed on his conduct, the second suggests the anxiety which his growing liberty created in him and the fear of what his true nature might be revealed to be. The creation of the Cahiers d'André Walter provides a partial

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 995.

<sup>101</sup> Si le grain ne meurt, p. 287.

answer to both questions. Gide himself notes in Si le grain ne meurt: "En ce temps il me fallait tout découvrir, inventer à la fois et le tourment et le remède . . . ." <sup>102</sup>  
 Through his first work he begins to discover his authentic nature.

However, the problem is not just with his present self. As the second question suggests, Gide is equally involved with the problem of what he will be. This concern with his future identity is clearly reflected in a Journal entry of January 3, 1892:

Je m'inquiète de ne savoir qui je serai; je ne sais même pas celui que je veux être; mais je sais bien qu'il faut choisir. Je voudrais cheminer sur des routes sûres, qui mènent seulement où j'aurais résolu d'aller; mais je ne sais pas; je ne sais pas ce qu'il faut que je veuille. Je sens mille possibles en moi; mais je ne puis me résigner à n'en vouloir être qu'un seul. <sup>103</sup>

The need to know what he will be in the future, the need to test the potentialities within him before realising them, and the need to be able to commit himself without his actions being irrevocable, are all satisfied by the work of art. The combination of the double, the work of art and the absolute provides Gide with exactly the kind of theoretical testing-ground in which he can be any one of the thousand virtual selves which he senses are contained in his unconscious. This

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>103</sup> Journal I, pp. 28-29.

is the lesson which the Cahiers d'André Walter provided, for, by identifying totally with André Walter, he was able to express unreservedly his repressed nature and yet, with the residual consciousness of the absolute, could still learn from this experience. Indeed, one can find a partial form of this prospective role of art described by André Walter himself:

Que la nuit est silencieuse. J'ai presque peur à m'endormir. On est seul. La pensée se projette comme sur un fond noir; le temps à venir apparaît sur le sombre comme une bande d'espace. Rien ne distrait de la vision commencée. On n'est plus qu'elle.<sup>104</sup>

All the qualities of the absolute and the work of art are present in this description except one. There is the isolation from external reality and there is the vision of the future which will be projected so long as there are no distractions. There is, however, little evidence of the conscious factor in the absolute. The final sentence implies total identification with the vision which is unreal, and the only suggestion of consciousness lies in the apprehension of its loss: "J'ai presque peur à m'endormir." Thus, one finds already anticipated on the second page of the novel, both the tragic fate of the hero and the means of salvation of the author. The ability to project into the future the tendencies which he sensed within him opened up a whole new range of

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<sup>104</sup> O.C. I, p. 28.

experience for Gide, and it is likely that it is of this function of art that he is thinking when he speaks of the "possibilités vertigineuses" which he glimpsed on shaking free from his hero.<sup>105</sup>

The Cahiers d'André Walter, which was to be Gide's Summa, his first and last work, proved in the event to be only the first in a literary career which was to span a further sixty years. This was so, we have suggested, because of the many functions which art fulfilled in Gide's life. Firstly, the Cahiers d'André Walter served as a means of catharsis. It allowed him to express those elements in his nature which his puritanical upbringing had led him to repress. It thus satisfied the "maladroit besoin d'épaissir la vie"<sup>106</sup> of which he was conscious throughout his childhood and adolescence. This function of art was made possible by the creation of the absolute and of the double. Gide was able to project his moral conflicts on to André Walter, and this allowed him, as author, to see these ethical crises in aesthetic terms in the manner in which he himself defined a year later in his Journal entry of January 11, 1892.

Je m'agite dans ce dilemme; être moral; être sincère. La morale consiste à supplanter l'être naturel (le vieil homme) par un être factice préféré. Mais alors, on n'est plus sincère. Le vieil homme, c'est l'homme sincère.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Si le grain ne meurt, p. 247.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

Je trouve ceci: le vieil homme, c'est le poète.  
 L'homme nouveau, que l'on préfère, c'est l'artiste.  
 Il faut que l'artiste supplante le poète. De la  
 lutte entre les deux naît l'oeuvre d'art.<sup>107</sup>

The transfer from the ethical to the aesthetic field not only produces the work of art itself, but also has the effect of increasing Gide's hold on reality because the struggle between the spontaneous poet and the disciplined artist takes place on a conscious level, whereas the conflict which it sublimates is subconscious.

The assimilation of the contents of the unconscious into consciousness which is facilitated by the process of artistic creation gives Gide a sense of completeness which the various forms of the "ivresse sans vin" cannot grant him. As a consequence of the synthesis of conscious and unconscious in the artistic process, Gide found that as he created the work of art he was creating his own identity. For the first time he was able to see himself in a mirror undistorted by the demands of the external world. Not only did the work of art enable him to know himself in the present, but also it allowed him to project present tendencies into the future, thus testing potential developments of his personality without committing himself definitively in real life.

It is little wonder, given the many functions that art fulfilled for Gide, that his pessimistic expectations of madness or death were transformed by the creation of the Cahiers

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<sup>107</sup> Journal I, pp. 29-30.

d'André Walter into a view of the future replete with "des possibilités vertigineuses." Nor is it surprising, in view of the salvation which the work of art afforded Gide, to find him identifying with the Symbolists who made a cult of art, and with Mallarmé, their acknowledged high priest.

## CONCLUSION

It has been our aim in this thesis to show that Gide's attraction to Symbolist theory can be explained in terms of his attitude to external reality. In order to define the Symbolist credo we have followed Gide's own lead. He states in his letter to Valéry of January 26, 1891, that it is the theory propounded in Delaroche's article in La Plume which has caused him to review his opinion of the Symbolist school. It is therefore to Delaroche's article that we have turned in order to find out precisely which aspects of Symbolist theory changed Gide's critical attitude into one of acceptance.

We have suggested that there were three fundamental points which attracted Gide. The first was Delaroche's suggesting that a parallel existed between the literary efforts of the Symbolists and the endeavours of contemporary scientists. This contention was intended as a defence against the charges that the Symbolists had turned their backs on life, and in Gide's case it was successful. Secondly, Delaroche's article suggested to Gide that Symbolism was able to embrace opposing tendencies which Gide felt were in conflict within his personality. The third, and in our



view, decisive point was Delaroche's suggestion that art was a means of exploring the inner reality of the artist. We have followed the analysis of Delaroche's article with an investigation of Gide's attitude to reality based on elementary principles of Freudian psychology. We have suggested that Gide's puritanical upbringing under the careful supervision of his mother had a profound influence on his relationship with the world around him. In particular, it created in him a state of neurotic anxiety in which his ego, fearful that the id's dominance of his personality might lead to condemnation by other people, attempted to inhibit spontaneous behaviour of all kinds. This is, in our view, the cause of his "besoin d'épaissir la vie" and the reason for his awareness of a "seconde réalité."<sup>1</sup> A further effect of Gide's neurotic anxiety is a weakening of his hold on reality. The ego, we have noted, has two functions. It is both administrator of the internal affairs of the personality, balancing the demands of the id and of the superego, and mediator between the organism and external reality. When the ego has to divert considerable amounts of energy to the first of these functions, there is correspondingly less for the second. In Gide's case we have seen that it is the reality-testing capacity of the ego which seems to have

<sup>1</sup>Cf. O.C. I, p. 75: "Je n'ai jamais eu de bonheur que ma raison ne désapprouve."

suffered, for he appears at times unable to distinguish between dream-wishes coming from within his psyche and perceptions of external reality. In our view, the temptation to prefer the world of his dreams to the real world forms one of the principal themes of the Cahiers d'André Walter, where Gide projects this tendency into the future and sees his double, André Walter, finally fall prey to madness.

In our final chapter we have investigated the role which the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter played in Gide's life. In this respect we have drawn attention to the importance of the absolute state which for Gide was a necessary prerequisite to artistic creation. The value of the absolute lies, we have suggested, in its reconciliation of the conscious and the unconscious. It possesses both the freedom of the dream and the lucidity of consciousness. It allows Gide to create the world in the form of his dreams and thus give full expression to those elements which are normally repressed in his unconscious. At the same time there is in the absolute a residual consciousness by means of which he is aware of the spontaneous release of tension. That this consciousness does not give rise to neurotic anxiety is due to the transfer of the conflict from the ethical to the aesthetic plane. Gide's devotion to literature is explained, in our view, by the fact that artistic creation, by affording expression to both his conscious and his unconscious selves, confers a sense of integration in

his personality which cannot be achieved in any other way. Nor is this the only benefit to be gained from art. By virtue of the same blend of conscious and unconscious, the creation of the work of art affords Gide a unique opportunity to consider his true identity. The work of art, insulated from external reality by the absolute, provides an excellent theoretical testing ground on which Gide can investigate not only the diverse facets of his present nature, but also their potential development in the future.

It now remains to elicit from the foregoing those elements in Gide's attitude to reality, informed by his experience of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter, which brought him to a view of art similar to that proposed in Delaroche's article. The Symbolist view that the phenomena of the real world are no more than imperfect manifestations of a superior, ideal reality is of obvious appeal to Gide in 1890. Not only was he reading Schopenhauer's Le Monde comme volonté et comme représentation at that time, but also he had himself experienced intimations of a superior form of reality, the earliest of which was his "seconde réalité." This childhood "besoin d'épaissir la vie" can be seen as a forerunner of Gide's later need of the isolation of the absolute in which to create the work of art, for both represent attempts, the one spontaneous and the other deliberate, to overcome the inhibitions which rendered his conscious life colourless and unsatisfying. Since the neurotic anxiety

which is the cause of Gide's inhibitions is fear of the reactions of other people, the work of art, insulated from the external world by the absolute, is the perfect remedy. In it Gide can give full and unrestricted expression to that part of his personality which in normal life is repressed, and as this includes his spontaneous, affective reaction to external reality as well as his instincts, the world appears to him in a fuller, more colourful and satisfying form. Thus the Symbolist theory confirmed what Gide had discovered in the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter: the fact that through art one can attain a superior form of reality of which everyday life gives no more than an approximate and imperfect indication.

The Cahiers d'André Walter also ensured that Gide would be receptive to Delaroche's suggestion that if Symbolism appeared to turn its back on external reality it was only in order to explore the essential inner nature of the artist. Indeed this proposal of art as a means of psychological investigation is in our view the point in Delaroche's article most likely to have attracted Gide. There is a wealth of evidence that Gide was more interested in his own nature than in the world around him. Brée, for example, points out that at the time of the Cahiers d'André Walter Gide is "un jeune homme pour qui le monde extérieur n'existe pas,"<sup>2</sup> and it might be

<sup>2</sup>Brée, op. cit., p. 39.

added that if the external world does exist for him, it is only for the emotions which it engenders in him, and not for its own sake: "Pas le paysage lui-même: l'émotion par lui causée."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, when Gide approaches the question of being and appearance in his Journal, it is not of external reality that he is thinking but rather of his own nature.

Thus in his entry of November, 1890, his thoughts are of himself when he notes the advice:

Ne pas se soucier de paraître. Etre, seul est important. Et ne pas désirer, par vanité, une trop hâtive manifestation de son essence.<sup>4</sup>

Now does the Cahiers d'André Walter reveal any concern for the world outside, for it conforms to the plan laid down in Walter's notes for Allain:

Le personnel simplifié jusqu'à un seul. - Et comme le drame est intime, rien n'en apparaît au dehors, pas un fait, pas une image, sinon peut-être symbolique: la vie phénoménale absente . . . .<sup>5</sup>

In the Cahiers, and especially in the "Cahier noir," nothing happens beyond the confines of Walter's mind. There is no external reality as such, for everything is presented through the medium of Walter's thoughts, memories and emotions, and the role of the other characters such as Emmanuèle and Ar\*\*\* seems to be restricted to the embodiment of attitudes to which Walter can react.

<sup>3</sup> O.C. I, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Journal I, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> O.C. I, p. 95.

It is in the manner of exploring the inner depths of the artist that we find the greatest similarity between the Symbolists' theory and Gide's practice. Delaroche quotes Poe's proposal of a "courant souterrain de pensée"<sup>6</sup> as a means of suggesting the truth to be communicated, and we have noted how this resembles the ideational framework of the work of art which Ireland finds proposed in the notes for Allain. The Cahiers d'André Walter again follows these notes closely, and thus conforms remarkably well to Poe's suggestion. Brée confirms this when she remarks on the fact that in the Cahiers Gide composes by juxtaposition rather than by creating a linear progression of cause and effect, and we would point out that Gide's use of the moth image as a commentary on Walter's attitude is an excellent example of this, for it is left to the reader to make the connection between Walter's attempts to stifle his reason and the fatal attraction of the lamp for the insects.<sup>7</sup> We have suggested, in fact, that the Cahiers d'André Walter can be regarded as a "démonstration" prepared as a warning to Madeleine, and that one of the "ideal lines" of the work is the gradual weakening of Walter's hold on reality. This is particularly true of the "Cahier noir," and we agree with Brée's view that the structural value of such lines of thought became evident

<sup>6</sup>Delaroche, art. cit., p. 16.

<sup>7</sup>cf. O.C. I, pp. 167-168.

to Gide only in the course of writing:

. . . l'on peut se demander si la théorie du roman révélateur de l'idée n'est point postérieure à la composition d'une partie du roman. Elle est ajoutée en note.<sup>8</sup>

Brée's suggestion is confirmed, in our view, by Gide's own words in his "Réflexions sur quelques points de littérature et de morale" when he gives his conception of the symbol:

Une oeuvre bien composée est nécessairement symbolique. Autour de quoi viendraient se grouper les parties? qui guiderait leur ordonnance? sinon l'idée de l'oeuvre, qui fait cette ordonnance symbolique.

L'oeuvre d'art, c'est une idée qu'on exagère.

Le symbole, c'est autour de quoi se compose un livre.

La phrase est une excroissance de l'idée.<sup>9</sup>

For Gide the symbol is a unifying principle of composition, not a single entity. It is the ideational substructure which is revealed by the flow of the narrative rather than by a conclusion, and, like Poe's "courant souterrain de pensée," it confers symbolic unity on the work. One can see the same principle in the Symbolists' proposal of the "psychical unity" of the "vers libre."<sup>10</sup>

The importance of the idea for Gide does not however reside purely in its unifying force in the work of art. It is what he calls the "raison d'être de l'oeuvre d'art."<sup>11</sup> Gide's description of his preparations for writing the Cahiers

<sup>8</sup> Brée, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>9</sup> Journal I, p. 94.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19, where the "vers libre" is defined as ". . . un vers . . . dont l'unité fut plutôt psychique que syllabique . . . ."

<sup>11</sup> Journal I, p. 94.

d'André Walter show that the pattern of construction based on the idea has its roots in his attitude to reality. We have seen that when he retreats within the absolute he allows the ideas in his mind to struggle among themselves until one prevails over the others. This is the "idée maîtresse," the tendency in Gide which can only be expressed in the isolation of the absolute where the conscious, rational ego will not impose inhibitions:

. . . folles, les hardiesses, les poésies, ce qui vaut la peine qu'on vive. La raison voudrait qu'on se conserve; elle est utilitaire, mais elle fait la vie insupportable à l'âme . . . .<sup>12</sup>

Risk, folly, madness and art are all linked together as positive aspects of life while the rational ego, although maintaining the integrity of the organism, allows the soul only the most unsatisfying of existences. The work of art thus embodies that vital part of his being which has no other means of expression in conscious life.

Gide's technique is to allow the idea which has prevailed in his mind to reach obsessive proportions before attempting to express it on paper, and it is for this reason that he defines the work of art as "an idea which one exaggerates." When he does begin to work, he writes without interruption until all the possibilities of the idea are exhausted, and it is this procedure which ensures that the

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<sup>12</sup>O.C. I, p. 75.



unity of the work is maintained by the intensity of the flow of previously inhibited material:

Il faut travailler avec acharnement, d'un coup, et sans que rien vous distraie; c'est le vrai moyen de l'unité de l'oeuvre.<sup>13</sup>

The work of art appears as a controlled manner of allowing the unconscious to invade the conscious mind. It thus fulfills two functions: it produces a gratifying release of tension and at the same time reveals an aspect of the essential self which is, we would suggest, one of the "bases logiques et nécessaires" of art proposed by Delaroche.<sup>14</sup>

However, if art was no more than a means of permitting the unconscious self to dominate the conscious self, it would result in a creature no more viable than the inhibited youth who faced the prospect of madness and suicide before the creation of the Cahiers d'André Walter--André Walter's fate is testimony to that. The absolute, we have noted, contains an element of consciousness which finds expression mainly in the formal and organisational activity involved in creating the work of art during Gide's bouts of uninterrupted writing. The original impression of spontaneity is somewhat tempered when we read Gide's comment on the months preceding the writing of the Cahiers d'André Walter:

Mais malgré le pressant besoin de mon âme, je sentais bien que mon livre n'était pas mûr, que je n'étais

<sup>13</sup> Journal I, p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19.

pas encore capable de l'écrire; c'est pourquoi j'envisageai sans trop d'impatience la perspective de quelques mois d'études supplémentaires, d'exercices et de préparations . . . .<sup>15</sup>

This is hardly the attitude of a spontaneous author, and we suggest that the careful apprenticeship in writing points to the crucial difference between André Walter and André Gide. The former fails because he cannot bring to bear the formal discipline which is required to transform the dream, which Delay terms "le temps d'évasion de la réalité,"<sup>16</sup> into the finished work of art, which is "le temps de retour à la réalité."<sup>17</sup> Gide, on the other hand, succeeds because he is able to put into practice the advice which he formulated in 1894:

Les choses les plus belles sont celles que souffle la folie et qu'écrit la raison. Il faut demeurer entre les deux, tout près de la folie quand on rêve, tout près de la raison quand on écrit.<sup>18</sup>

There is evidence in Gide's letter to Valéry of January 26, 1891, that he was already aware of the need for disciplined style which is expressed in this statement. After declaring his allegiance to the Symbolists, Gide tells Valéry of his preference for the leader of the school in terms which reveal that his own conception of Symbolism entailed control:

<sup>15</sup>Si le grain ne meurt, p. 243.

<sup>16</sup>Delay, op. cit. I, p. 596,

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Journal I, p. 50.

Donc, je suis symboliste et sachez-le. Ils disent Moréas chef de l'école. Oh! non - mais Mallarmé certes - parnassien peut-être pour la forme, mais symboliste dans l'âme.<sup>19</sup>

The distinction which he makes here between "forme" and "âme" parallels exactly his 1894 definition of the perfect artistic combination of rationally controlled writing and inspiration which is found in the irrationality of the dream. It is the perfection of style which in Gide's eyes distinguishes Mallarmé's poetry from that of the other Symbolists, and, for that matter, from any other poet. The note which Gide leaves at Mallarmé's house with a copy of the Cahiers d'André . Walter testifies to his admiration for the beauty of the master's verse:

. . . vous m'avez appris la honte de mon livre et l'ennui de la poésie, car vous avez chanté tous les vers que j'aurais rêvé d'écrire.<sup>20</sup>

There may be a deprecating note in Gide's reference to Mallarmé's Parnassian style, but this in our view does not detract from the fact that Gide realised his need for disciplined form. Rather it reflects the constant struggle within him between the poet's wish for spontaneity and the artist's search for controlled perfection.<sup>21</sup> Gide's ambivalence towards the Parnassian style is expressed in a letter

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<sup>19</sup> Correspondance, p. 46.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Correspondance, p. 52, note 3.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Journal I, pp. 29-30, where Gide transfers the conflict within him from the ethical to the aesthetic plane.

to Valéry of August 28, 1891:

Cette perfection parnassienne, toute postiche, me  
donne de grandes nausées quand j'y pense, et pourtant  
c'est la seule qui satisfasse.<sup>22</sup>

However grudging his acceptance of discipline in style is, Gide realises that this perfection which Mallarmé proposes is a necessity, and not solely for literary reasons. It is a question of survival, of sanity.

The combination of spontaneous, lyrical inspiration and controlled formal organisation which characterises the Cahiers d'André Walter saves Gide from André Walter's fate because it grants expression to both sides of his nature at the same time. Art proves to be the perfect method of assimilating into his consciousness those elements which have been repressed in his unconscious. It thus grants Gide a sense of wholeness, of integration and of plenitude which is inaccessible to him in either the normal conscious state or in the world of dreams where the unconscious reigns. It is little wonder, then, that when Gide reads Moréas's definition of the Symbolist conception of rhythm as "un désordre savamment ordonné,"<sup>23</sup> he accepts it with enthusiasm, for this description seems to fit exactly the style of the Cahiers d'André Walter which has just proved to be his salvation.

<sup>22</sup>Correspondance, p. 121.

<sup>23</sup>Delaroche, art. cit., p. 19.

The attraction of Symbolism for Gide in 1891 can perhaps best be understood in the light of a passage in Michaud's Message poétique du Symbolisme which defines the relationship between Decadence and Symbolism:

Décadence et Symbolisme sont, non pas deux écoles, comme on tend généralement à le faire croire, mais deux phases successives d'un même mouvement, deux étapes de la révolution poétique. Qu'à une certaine heure, elles se soient opposées l'une à l'autre, ceci ne relève que de la petite histoire . . . . Mais, considérée de plus haut, la Décadence, ou, comme on se plaisait à dire, le "Décadentisme", nous apparaît comme le moment du lyrisme, l'épanchement d'une sensibilité inquiète, à l'état de crise, le Symbolisme étant le moment intellectuel, la phase de réflexion sur ce lyrisme, à la recherche d'une unité que n'avait pas su, en France, découvrir le Romantisme, et qui permettra de définir la poésie en son essence et de poser les bases d'un régime nouveau. Il n'est rien de plus frappant que ce mouvement tournant, cette reprise de soi, cette découverte soudaine d'un équilibre. Le passage de la Décadence au Symbolisme, c'est le passage du pessimisme à l'optimisme, et en même temps la découverte de la poésie.<sup>24</sup>

If, like Michaud, we are prepared to look "de plus haut," the similarity between Gide's development through the Cahiers d'André Walter and the progression from Decadence to Symbolism is startling. In Gide, as in the Symbolists, one finds an initial opposition between the lyrical and the intellectual. Just as Decadence was the moment of lyricism, the effusion of sensibility, so André Walter represented the expression of fervent mysticism which characterised Gide. Similarly,

<sup>24</sup>Michaud, op. cit., p. 234.

Gide the author found that art, by allowing him to reflect on his crisis of sensibility, was a means of creating unity and equilibrium in his personality.<sup>25</sup> In addition he also found, as did the Symbolists, that the reconciliation of the lyrical and the intellectual, of the unconscious and the conscious, in the work of art, gave him an opportunity to define his essential nature. Finally, the change from pessimism to optimism which marked the passage from Decadence to Symbolism found a parallel in Gide's development from despair to hope, a development which also coincided with the discovery of art.

Given the similarities pointed out above, it is small wonder that Gide recognised the Symbolists as kindred spirits. His evolution up to the point of his contact with the Symbolists had paralleled theirs, but while their problems lay principally in the field of artistic theory, Gide's difficulties stemmed almost exclusively from his relationship to the world around him. It is our view that Gide was attracted to the Symbolists mainly because their conception of art confirmed and perhaps also clarified his reflections on his experience of writing the Cahiers d'André Walter, and in particular because he identified the ultimate satisfaction of the integration of his personality with the superior world of ideas which the Symbolists proposed as the goal of art.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Journal, I, p. 94: "L'oeuvre est un équilibre hors du temps."

However, it is precisely in this comparison that the seed of Gide's later rejection of Symbolism is to be found. The superior world of the Symbolists lay in an ideal realm beyond everyday reality, and therefore art, Delaroché's denial notwithstanding, did tend to divert their attention from real life. In Gide's case, on the other hand, art, by contributing to the integration of his personality, served to bring him into closer contact with the world around him. Delaroché's article, and later the influence of Mallarmé, may have succeeded in masking the fundamental difference between Gide's attitude to reality and that of the Symbolists, but only for a time,<sup>26</sup> for already the development which would culminate in the Nourritures terrestres had begun.

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<sup>26</sup>Cf. Savage, art. cit., p. 601.

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